



# A NEW HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH STAGE

*FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE LIBERTY OF  
THE THEATRES,*

IN CONNECTION WITH THE PATENT HOUSES,

*From Original Papers in the Lord Chamberlain's Office, the State Paper Office, and other sources*

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ETC ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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FROM THE CIBBER-WILKS MANAGEMENT TO THAT OF  
GARRICK, 1710-1747





# A NEW HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH STAGE.

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## CHAPTER I

### DISORDERS.

THE idea of self-importance which the actor exhibited during this period is shown by the following advertisement issued by one of reputation, and belonging to the "old set," namely, Boheme. At the bottom of the bill for April 27th, 1723, he announced. "Whereas I am informed that there is a report about the town that the managers of Drury Lane have lately endeavoured to seduce me from Lincoln's Inn Fields, I think myself obliged, in justice to the said managers, to declare that the said report is entirely false; and do hereby acknowledge that I first made overtures to be received into their company, for reasons at that time to myself best known, and further that it was never proposed by either of the said managers or myself that I should quit Lincoln's Inn Fields without six months' warning given to supply my part, and a discharge in writing from the managers of Lincoln's Inn Fields."

A tide of violence seemed destined to pursue actors In March, 1735, an extraordinary incident befell Ryan. Towards midnight, after the play was over, he was going through Queen Street, and was crossing, when he heard a person dogging him closely A villain immediately clapped a pistol to his mouth and fired, it was believed to be only charged with powder Ryan exclaimed "Friend, you have killed me, but I forgive you"—a very noble speech, and showing what his first thought was He was taken to a surgeon's, and it was found that his teeth had been shot away and his jaw-bone shattered To a good actor this was ruin, and in an address to the public it was stated that it was uncertain that he would ever appear again For his benefit a large audience assembled, and the Prince of Wales sent him a "gold ticket" of ten guineas He was eventually so far cured as to be able to resume his profession, but though there was always a whistling sound in his voice that gave a sort of grotesqueness, he was so sound and judicious an actor that he always commanded an audience and held an excellent position.\*

Ryan had an affray with some watermen, the result of which is thus naively reported "His voice was originally a sharp shrill treble, but he received a blow on the nose which turned that feature a little out of its place, though not so much as to occasion any deformity, made an alteration in his voice also by no means to its advantage, yet still it continued not disgusting"

\* Davies declares that this defect did not exist, and that his elocution was excellent, but from Wilkinson's Mimicry, and the recorded jest in which he was bidden to make his son as good an actor as himself by getting him shot through the mouth, it seems most probable But he retained a dreadful scar It is curious how we can find links of a chain that will join us to a very remote period A short time since I talked with an old gentleman who knew intimately Jack Taylor of the "Sun" Taylor had talked with Tom Davies, Johnson's friend, who described to him Ryan recounting his meeting with Betterton

Ryan had enjoyed a kind of prescriptive claim to all the lovers in tragedy and fine gentlemen in comedy, at the theatres in Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden, for nearly thirty years.

In a conversation which I had with him some years before his death (says Davies), he told me that he began the trade of acting when he was a boy of about sixteen or seventeen years of age, and that one of his first parts, which was suddenly put into his hands in the absence of a more experienced player, was Seyton, an old officer in "Macbeth," when Betterton acted the principal character. As Betterton had not seen Ryan before he came on the stage, he was surprised at the sight of a boy in a large full-bottomed wig, such as our judges now wear on the Bench. However, by his looks he encouraged him to go on with what he had to say; and when the scene was over he commended the actor, but reproved old Downes, the prompter, for sending a child to him instead of a man advanced in years. The first dawn of his good fortune was the distinction paid him by Mr Addison, who selected him from the tribe of young actors to play the part of Marcus in "Cato." The author and his friend Steele invited him to a tavern some time before the play was acted, and instructed him in his part. The old gentleman felt an honest pleasure in recollecting that early mark of favour bestowed on him by men of such eminence. In his person Ryan was something above the middle size, in his action and deportment rather easy than graceful, he was often awkward in the management of his head, by raising his chin and stretching out his neck; his voice was very powerful, but harsh and dissonant.

Some time after, a man who lay dying in an hospital, being wounded in a street scuffle, sent to beg Mr. Ryan would come to him, which the actor did. The fellow confessed that he was the man who had fired at him, and begged his forgiveness.

We have seen that in Clare Market and its neighbourhood were taverns frequented by the actors, where many drinking brawls and fatal scuffles had taken place. As we pass through these uncleanly slums, we see some of the old houses still remaining, and there is now standing close to Portugal Street a much-begrimed old tavern known as The Black Jack, which was frequented by players in the days of William the Third and Anne. Near it is another old house of call, that projects over the street, supported on columns. It is not difficult to fancy this place the scene of such incidents as are described in a roystering ballad of the day, written by a player, and in which he pictures the jolly life of the player.

Mr. John Leigh (says Chetwood) I think was born in Ireland. He commenced actor, however, on the Irish theatre. He was a person of some education, with a particular amiable form, and genteel address, in so much that he gained the appellation of "Handsome Leigh." A good figure was the chief advantage in the parts he performed. He was called from this kingdom to fill up the troop of comedians raised to garrison the New Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in the year 1714, at its first opening, where he set forth the first night in Captain Plume, in "The Recruiting Officer," which occasioned the following lines wrote on the back of one of their bills

'Tis right to raise recruits, for faith, they're wanted,  
For not one acting soldier's here, 'tis granted

Mr. Leigh, I believe, might have been in the good graces of the fair sex, if his taste had led him that way. He has wrote several humorous songs. Here follows a sample, which, as it is a theatrical anecdote, will require a little illustration by way of notes.

*To the Tune of "Thomas, I cannot"*

My scandalous neighbours of Portugal Street  
Come listen a while to my ditty,  
I'll sing you a song, tho' my voice be not sweet,  
And that you will say is a pity  
As meiry a sonnet as times can afford,  
Of Eggleton,\* Walker, Jack Hall,† and my lord,  
[Mr Chetwood here interrupts his ballad  
to furnish commentaries ]  
If you doubt of the truth, to confirm every word,  
I'll call for a witness—Will Thomas—Will Thomas,‡  
I'll call for a witness—Will Thomas !

## II

First Eggleton coax'd the fool over the way  
With sentences sweeter than honey,  
A toad in a hole was their dinner that day,  
And my noodle he lent them his money  
What tho' I have got by him many a crown,  
What I ne'er can forgive him is, that he came down  
Five guineas the night ere he went out of town  
Is this true, or no? O yes! says Will Thomas!  
O yes, etc.

\* Mr Egleton, commonly called Baron Egleton, for taking that title upon him in France, where he squandered away a small patrimony His person was perfectly genteel, and a very pleasing actor, but through a wild road of life he finished his journey in the twenty ninth year of his age

† Mr John Hall, a sharer in old Smock Alley Theatre, above thirty years ago. He went from hence with Mr Leigh to the New Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. He was something too corpulent, and a thickness of speech that might be mimicked with ease, which adds some humour to this ballad. He understood music, and was once a dancing master, and the original Lockit in "The Beggar's Opera."

‡ A waiter at a coffee-house in Portugal Street, over against the stage-door, a person in understanding pretty near on a par with my lord.

## III.

Tom Walker, his creditors meaning to chouse,  
 Like an honest good-natur'd young fellow,  
 Resolv'd all the summer to stay in the house,  
 And rehearse by himself "Massianello."  
 As soon as he heard of the Baron's success,\*  
 He stript off his night-gown and put on his dress,  
 And cry'd d——n my b——d! I will strike for no less;  
 So he call'd o'er the hatch† for Will Thomas! Will  
 Thomas!  
 So he call'd, etc.

## IV.

Go tell my young lord, says this modest young man,  
 I beg he'd invite me to dinner;  
 I'll be as diverting as ever I can,  
 I will by the faith of a sinner!  
 I mimic all actors, the worst, and the best,  
 I'll sing him a song, I'll crack him a jest,  
 I'll make him act better than Henley the priest.  
 I'll tell him so, sir, says Will Thomas, Will Thomas,  
 I'll tell him so, etc.

## V.

Jack Hall, who was then just awaken'd from sleep,  
 Said (turning about to Grace Moffet) ‡  
 'Twon'd vex any dog to see pudding thus creep,  
 And not have a share of the profit  
 If you have not, says Grace, you're not Mr Hall!  
 And if I have not, it shall cost me a fall,  
 For half a loaf's better than no bread at all,  
 And so I'll call out for Will Thomas, Will Thomas,  
 And so, etc.

\* Mr Egleton received the five guineas from the lord

† The hatch of the stage-door The bounds of those theatrical princes that might receive four pounds a week, and by their industry make shift to spend six—a great virtue in some theatrical gentry

‡ Grace Moffet, daughter to Mr Hall's second wife, that kept The Bell and Dragon in Portugal Street

## VI.

Go tell my young lord, I can teach him to dance,  
 Altho' I'm no very great talker,  
 I'll show him good manners just landed from France,  
 That's more than he'll learn from Tom Walker!  
 I sing, and I act, I dance, and I fence,  
 I am a rare judge of—good eating—and sense;  
 And then, as for English, I understand French.  
 I'll tell him so, sir, says Will Thomas, Will Thomas,  
 I'll tell him so, etc.

## VII.

The peer was just going his purse-strings to draw,  
 In order to lend them his money,  
 As soon as his forward good nature I saw,  
 I cried out, My lord, fie upon you!  
 To us you're as hard as a Turk or a Jew,  
 If you part with your money, pay where it's due;  
 Poor Betty's \* with child, and it may be by you.  
 Here's fun for us all! cried Will Thomas, Will Thomas,  
 Here's fun, etc.

## VIII.

When his lordship heard this, away down he ran,  
 And drove away straight to The Devil,†  
 Will Thomas sneak'd over to The Green Man,‡  
 Thus our customers use us uncivil.  
 Poor Betty's misfortune is pity'd by all,  
 Who expects ev'ry moment in pieces to fall,  
 Tho' she swears 'tis my lord's 'twas got by Jack Hall,  
 Tho' she swears, etc.

Notwithstanding its pantomimes, Lincoln's Inn Fields

\* Betty, maid to the coffee woman, that could serve the peer and the porter.

† The Devil Tavern, Temple Bar.

‡ A brandy-shop over the way.



Theatre did not flourish. The disorderly neighbourhood seemed to affect its stage. We hear constantly of scenes of confusion on the stage. In 1720 there is a notice to this effect that owing to the rioting and disturbances by the audience, liberty of the scenes being abused, no one was to be admitted but by half-guinea tickets at the stage-door. And in July it is announced that the company is dissolved, and the house seized in execution for debt. They appear to have got over their difficulties, for in October of the following year we find a fresh disturbance at Lincoln's Inn Fields playhouse, several persons assaulting the sentinels and throwing dirt at them. Nor is it a surprise to learn that "on December 22nd, Ogden, the comedian of Lincoln's Inn Fields, is double-ironed in Newgate for treason, each player of the new house allowing him half a day's pay per week." Again, on Wednesday night, February 1st, Mr. Berkeley, Mr. Cornwallis, Mr. Fielding, and another made a disturbance by assaulting the actors upon the stage, and were carried to the Roundhouse, and afterwards before Justice Hungerford. The theatre was closed the following nights, "the company thinking it fit to desist from playing till proper care be taken to prevent the like disorders for the future. N.B.—The persons who occasioned the late disorders are under prosecution."

That excellent actor, Ryan, who was beginning to make an impression under the patronage of his countryman Quin, was also the innocent occasion of the death of a companion. A less fatal adventure, but which nearly shipwrecked his professional prosperity, was later to befall him. He took great delight in walking, and by persevering in that exercise preserved his health to a good old age. At length, in the sixty-eighth year of a life, fifty years of which he had spent in the service and entertainment of the public, he paid the general debt of

nature at Bath, to which place he had retired for the benefit of his health, the 15th of August, 1765.

After his trouble, Steele, who had grown old, withdrew from the town Victor, a well-known man about the theatres, gives in a few words a pleasing little sketch of him He retired, he says, to Hereford. "I am told he retained his cheerful sweetness of temper to the last, and would often be carried out in a summer's evening where the country lads and lasses were assembled at their rural sports, and with his pencil give an order on his agent (a mercer, who was receiver of the rents of an encumbered estate he had with his wife) for a new gown to the best dancer."

When the play of "The Coronation" was first performed, in 1723, at Drury Lane, a very serious catastrophe had almost occurred A great crowd had assembled, when "an alarm of fire was raised, from ignorance or malice, which threw the audience into a dreadful consternation for about half an hour" A few days later appeared a reassuring explanation of the means ready at the theatre for extinguishing a conflagration Captain Shaw of our day might have written it. "It is the proper business of several persons, with several inspectors over them, to fire and light all the lamps in and about the playhouse, in large candlesticks and broad stands made of tin, in so safe a manner that should any candle swail, and fall out of its socket, no danger could attend it Large cisterns of water above stairs and below, and hand engines are always ready, and the carpenters, scene men, and servants are employed in such numbers during the whole time of representation, and disposed in order, every light in the whole theatre is in view of some of the servants "

Later we shall see what honest friendly interest King George the Third took in the stage. His predecessor was, to a certain extent, a patron of the drama, and Frederick Reynolds

entertained at Chiselhurst, about the beginning of the century, an old gentleman and his wife who had been at the Court of George the Second. He gave him a curious sketch of a royal visit to the playhouse about this time

His Majesty arriving at the theatre some few minutes after his time, the arbitrary audience (who will rarely allow even a regal actor to keep the stage business waiting) received him with some very hasty rude marks of their disapprobation. The King, taken by surprise, for a moment expressed both chagrin and embarrassment, but, with a prompt recollection, he skillfully converted all their anger into applause. He drew forth his watch, and having pointed to the hand, and shown it to the lord in waiting, he advanced to the front of the box, and directing the attention of the audience to his proceedings, he deliberately beat the misleading timekeeper against the box—thus proving he was a great actor, and deserving of the full houses he always brought

The play commenced and concluded with its usual success; and no other unusual circumstance occurred until the middle of the after-piece, where a centaur was introduced, who having to draw a bow, and therewith shoot a formidable adversary, through some confusion, erring in his aim, the arrow entered the royal box and grazed the person of the King. The audience rose in indignation against the perpetrator of this atrocious attempt, and seemed preparing to revenge the outrage, when at that moment the whole *fore part* of the centaur fell on its face among the lamps, in consequence of the carpenter, who played the *posterior*, rushing from his concealment with the most trembling humility in order to assure His Majesty, and all present, that he was no party in this *treasonable* transaction.

At these words rose and advanced “the *very head and front* of the offence,” and, likewise endeavouring to exculpate himself, energetically addressed the audience. The noisy discussion and the ridiculous criminations and vindications which ensued between these two grotesque, half-dressed, *half-human* beings, so amply rewarded George the Second and the spectators for the previous alarm, that loud and involuntary shouts of laughter from every part of the house acknowledged that the

centaur's *head and tail* were incomparably the most amusing performers of the evening.

At this time other disasters occurred.

In the year 1721, Mr Rich (says Mr Victor) obtained leave for a party of the Guards to do duty at his house like the other, and that gave it the name of the Theatre Royal. The accident of obtaining the Guards to do duty at his theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1721, was occasioned by a riot then committed there by a drunken set of young men of quality, which shut up that theatre for seven or eight days. A certain noble earl, who was said (and with some degree of certainty, as he drank usquebaugh constantly at his waking) to have been in a state of drunkenness for six years, was behind the scenes at the close of a comedy ("The Beggar's Opera"), and seeing one of his companions on the other side, he crossed over the stage among the performers, and was accordingly hissed by the audience. I was standing by Mr Rich on the side the noble lord came over to, and on the uproar in the house at such an irregularity, the manager said "I hope your lordship will not take it ill if I give orders to the stage-door keeper not to admit you any more." On his saying that, my lord saluted Mr Rich with a slap on the face, which he immediately returned; and his lordship's face being round and fat, made his cheek ring with the force of it. Upon this spirited return, my lord's drunken companions collected themselves directly, and Mr. Rich was to be put to death; but Quin, Ryan, Walker, etc, stood forth in defence of the manager, and a grand scuffle ensued, by which the gentlemen were all drove out at the stage-door into the street. They then sallied into the boxes with their swords drawn, and broke the sconces, cut the hangings (which were gilt leather finely painted), and continued the riot there till Mr Quin came round with a constable and watchmen, and charged them every one into custody. They were carried before Justice Hungerford, who then lived in that neighbourhood, and all bound over to answer the consequences, but they were soon persuaded by their wiser friends to make up this matter, and the manager got ample redress. The King, being informed of the whole affair, was highly offended, and

ordered a guard to attend that theatre as well as the other, which is continued to this day.

The three managers, however, had used all their exertions to bring about a reform, both behind the curtain and in the audiences. "From the visible errors of former managements," says one of them, "we had at last found the necessary means to bring our private laws and orders into the general observance and approbation of our society. Diligence and neglect were under an equal eye the one never failed its reward, and the other, by being very rarely excused, was less frequently committed. You are now to consider us in our height of favour, and so much in fashion with the politer part of the town, that our house every Saturday seemed to be the appointed assembly of the first ladies of quality Of this too the common spectators were so well apprised, that for twenty years successively on that day we scarce ever failed of a crowded audience, for which occasion we particularly reserved our best plays, acted in the best manner we could give them. Among our many necessary reformatations, what a little preserved to us the regard of our auditors was the decency of our clear stage, from whence we had now for many years shut out those idle gentlemen who seemed more delighted to be pretty objects themselves than capable of any pleasure from the play, who took their daily stands where they might best elbow the actor and come in for their share of the auditors' attention. In many a laboured scene of the warmest humour and of the most affecting passion, have I seen the best actors disconcerted while these buzzing musquitos have been fluttering round their eyes and ears"

Yet we find the performances still disgraced by violent interruptions and scuffles, which did not augur well for the prosperity of the house. When a comedy, in 1718, called "The Modish Citizen," was being played at Lincoln's Inn Fields, a gentleman pointed at a young gentlewoman in one of the

side boxes, on which another gentleman, one of her acquaintances, went over and challenged him. They drew and made passes at one another, which threw the whole house into an uproar. They were parted, and neither was killed.

A graver specimen, however, of these savage box manners shows how difficult it was for the managers, with even the best intentions, to preserve order

About the year 1717, a young actress, of a desirable person, sitting in an upper box at the opera, a military gentleman thought this a proper opportunity to secure a little conversation with her; but notwithstanding the fine things he said to her, she rather chose to give the music the preference of her attention. This indifference was so offensive to his high heart, that he proceeded at last to treat her in a style too grossly insulting. Upon which, being beaten too far out of her discretion, she turned hastily upon him, with an angry look, and a reply which seemed to set his merit in so low a regard that he thought himself obliged, in honour, to take his time to resent it. This was the full extent of her crime, which his glory delayed no longer to punish, than till the next time she was to appear upon the stage. There, in one of her best parts, wherein she drew a favourable regard and approbation from the audience, he, dispensing with the respect which some people think due to a polite assembly, began to interrupt her performance with such loud and various notes of mockery as other young men of honour in the same place have sometimes made themselves undauntedly merry with. Thus, deaf to all murmurs or entreaties of those about him, he pursued his point, even to throwing near her such trash as no person can be supposed to carry about him, unless to use on so particular an occasion. A gentleman, then behind the scenes, being shocked at his unmanly behaviour, was warm enough to say, that no man but a fool or a bully could be capable of insulting an audience or a woman in so monstrous a manner. The former valiant gentleman, to whose ear the words were soon brought by his spies, whom he had placed behind the scenes to observe how the action was taken there, came im-

mediately from the pit, in a heat, and demanded to know of the author of those words if he was the person that spoke them, to which he calmly replied, "That though he had never seen him before, yet, since he seemed so earnest to be satisfied he would do him the favour to own that, indeed, the words were his" To conclude, their dispute was ended the next morning in Hyde Park, where the determined combatant, who first asked for satisfaction, was obliged afterwards to ask his life too.

I remember (says Chetwood) above twenty years past, I was one of the audience at a new play; before me sat a sea officer with whom I had some acquaintance, on each hand of him a couple of sparks both prepared with their offensive instruments, vulgarly termed cat-calls, which they were often tuning before the play began. The officer did not take any notice of them till the curtain drew up, but when they continued their sow-gelder's music (as he unpolitely called it) he begged they would not prevent his hearing the actors, though they might not care whether they heard or no. But they took little notice of his civil request, which he repeated again and again to no purpose. But at last one of them condescended to tell him, if he did not like it he might let it alone. "Why, really," replied the sailor, "I do not like it, and would have you let your noise alone. I have paid my money to see and hear the play, and your ridiculous noise not only hinders me, but a great many other people that are here, I believe, with the same design; now, if you prevent us, you rob us of our money and our time; therefore I entreat you, as you look like gentlemen, to behave as such." One of them seemed mollified, and put his whistle in his pocket, but the other was incorrigible. The blunt tar made him one speech more. "Sir," said he, "I advise you once more to follow the example of this gentleman, and put up your pipe." But the piper sneered in his face, and clapped his troublesome instrument to his mouth, with cheeks swelled out like a trumpeter, to give it a redoubled and louder noise, but, like the broken crow of a cock in a fright, the squeak was stopped in the middle by a blow from the officer, which he gave him with so strong a will that his child's trumpet was struck through his cheek.

Nor was this all Quin, who, through the illness of Mills three years before, had taken the part of Bajazet at short notice, and had made a reputation on the spot, was now to contribute to this list of disorders. There was at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields a choleric Irishman, named Bowen, "who had a loud strong voice, which gave him the title of an actor of spirit. Though the interest of the late Duke of Ormond he got into the Revenue in London He was fiery to a fault, and passionate to his prejudice, which drew on his own death by the unwilling hands of Mr Quin."

Mr Bowen had several children by his wife, and a boy, who, though he bore his name, had none of his care, and therefore lived a dissolute life, without the least improvement from education, and justly gained the nickname of Rugged and Tough One day a clergyman in St. Clement Danes (a church in the Strand) was catechising the children of the parish, where Rugged and Tough thrust among the rest Rugged's dress was none of the cleanest, which the good parson observing, called him the first to be examined I shall put the short dialogue down just as I had it from an ear-witness; since the questions are short, as well as the answers, they will not appear very tedious :

*Parson.* What's your name ?

*Rug.* Rugged and Tough.

*Parson.* Who gave you that name ?

*Rug.* The boys of our alley, L——d d——m 'em for't.

The good parson was a little surprised, no doubt, and ordered him to wait till the rest of the children were examined, intending to polish Master Rugged and Tough, but Tough, not liking to wait so long, stole off unperceived All I could learn of Mr Rugged and Tough afterwards was that, having a great inclination to travel, he contrived means to do it at the charge of the Government.

Thus bad beginning to bad ending tends,  
And vice in Nature, Nature seldom mends.



Nor can one relish exhibitions of decrepit old age, though such may be links between bygone generations. In the year 1720 there was some grotesque curiosity to see Peg Flyer, who, it was asserted in the bills, had "never acted since the days of Charles II.," being then eighty-five years old. "There were to be 'entertainments of dancing by Mrs. Fryer, particularly the Bashful Maid and the Irish Trot,' and when she came to the dance she affected to be utterly exhausted. "She made her obeisance to the audience, and was about to retire, when the orchestra struck up the Irish Trot, and the animated old woman danced her promised jig with the nimbleness and vivacity of five-and-twenty, laughing at the surprise of the audience, and receiving unbounded applause After this, she kept a tavern and ordinary at Tottenham Court, and her house was continually thronged with company, who went, out of curiosity, to converse with this extraordinary old woman "

In 1723, this reign of the three managers, which was not undramatic, was to be rendered remarkable by the production of a play, "Sir Thomas Overbury," by that strangest of adventurers, Richard Savage, and whose story forms a romance that fiction has never equalled This was the Richard Savage who has been assumed to have been Lady Macclesfield's unacknowledged son. This interesting question has been often discussed by Boswell, Dr. Johnson, and many others Savage's intolerant character is in favour of Lady Macclesfield, whom it is as unlikely that he should have persecuted as that she should have appeared to be acting "unnaturally" in resisting his claims It is certain, however, that she had a child whose birth was attended with much mystery. It appears that "Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, under the name of Madam Smith, was delivered of a male child in Fox Court, near Brook Street, Holborn, by Mrs Wright, a midwife, on

Saturday, the 16th of January, 1696-97, at six o'clock in the morning, who was baptized on the Monday following, and registered by the name of Richard, the son of John Smith." During her delivery the lady wore a mask, and Mary Pegler on the next day after the baptism (Tuesday) took a male child, whose mother was called Madam Smith, from the house of Mrs Pheasant, who went by the name of Mrs. Lee, in Fox Court

Savage's gifts attracted the friendship of Steele and the excellent Wilks, who were unwearied in their efforts to help him. But Savage was incurably dissipated, and, moreover, seems to have had a malignant temper that prompted him to turn on those who aided him. Steele wished to marry him to his daughter, and promised to raise 1000*l.* for him; but the ill-conditioned Savage was presently turning his kind patron into ridicule.

Mr Wilks, however, still remained in his interest; and even found means to soften the heart of Savage's mother so far as to obtain from her the sum of 50*l.*, with a promise of further relief for this her outcast offspring, but we do not find that this promise was performed

Being thus obliged to depend on Mr Wilks, he became an assiduous frequenter of the theatres, and thence the amusements of the stage took such possession of his mind that he was never absent from a play in several years

In 1723, he brought on the stage his tragedy of "Sir Thomas Overbury," in which he himself performed the principal character, but with so little reputation, that he used to blot his name out of the *dramatis personæ* whenever any of the printed copies of the play fell into his hands. The whole profits of this performance, from the acting, printing, and the dedication, amounted to about 200*l.* When he found himself greatly involved, he would ramble about like a vagabond, with scarcely a shirt on his back. He was in one of these situations all the time wherein he wrote his tragedy above mentioned; without a lodging, and often without a dinner, so that he used

to scribble on scraps of paper picked up by accident, or begged in the shops which he occasionally stepped into, as thoughts occurred to him, craving the favour of the pen and ink, as it were, just to take a memorandum.

In 1727, he came from Richmond, and meeting with two acquaintances, Marchant and Gregory, he went in with them to a coffee-house, where they sat drinking until it was late. On leaving, they agreed to ramble about the streets, and divert themselves with such incidents as should occur, till morning. Happening to discover a light in a coffee-house near Charing Cross, they went in and demanded a room. They were told the next parlour would be empty presently, as a company were then paying their reckoning, in order to leave it. Marchant, not satisfied with this answer, abruptly rushed into the room and behaved very rudely. This produced a quarrel, swords were drawn, and in the confusion one Mr James Sinclair was killed. A woman-servant likewise was accidentally wounded by Savage as she was endeavouring to hold him.

Savage and his companions, being taken into custody, were tried for this offence, and both he and Gregory were capitally convicted of murder. Savage pleaded his own cause, and behaved with great resolution, but it was too plainly proved that he gave Sinclair his death-wound, while Gregory commanded the sword of the deceased.

The convicts, being reconducted to prison, were heavily ironed, and remained with no hope of life but from the royal mercy; but his own mother endeavoured to intercept it.

Owing to the influence of Mrs Oldfield with Sir R Walpole his pardon was obtained. His presumed mother was forced, by his threats it was said, to make him a small allowance, and he obtained a situation in Lord Tyrconnel's family, with a salary of 200*l.* a year. His lordship, however, had soon to dismiss him, saying that Savage was guilty of introducing company into his house, with whom he practised the most licentious frolics, and committed all the outrages of drunkenness; moreover, *that he pawned or sold the books of*

which his lordship had made him a present, so that he had often the mortification to see them exposed to sale upon stalls. On the other hand, Savage alleged that Lord Tyrconnel quarrelled with him, because he would not subtract from his own luxury what he had promised to allow him. He now thought he would revenge himself upon his mother. Accordingly, he wrote "The Bastard," in which occurs a famous line

Blest be the bastard's birth ! through wondrous ways  
 He shmes eccentric like a comet's blaze  
 No sickly fruit of faint compliance he ;  
 He ! stamp'd in Nature's mint with ecstasy !  
 He lives to build, not boast, a gen'rous race ;  
*No tenth transmitter of a foolish face.*  
 He, kindling from within, requires no flame,  
 He glories in a bastard's glowing name.  
 —Nature's unbounded son he stands alone,  
 His heart unbiass'd, and his mind his own  
 —O mother ! yet no mother ! —'tis to you  
*My thanks for such distinguish'd claims are due.*

A more terrible, ghastly apostrophe was never penned.

This poem had an extraordinary sale, and its appearance happening at the time when the lady was at Bath, many persons there took frequent opportunities of repeating passages from "The Bastard" in her hearing, so that she was obliged to fly the place (!)

He now sank lower and lower He forfeited a pension which the Queen had given him. He spent his days and nights, when he had any money, in eating and drinking, in which he would indulge in the most unsociable manner, sitting whole days and nights by himself, in obscure houses of entertainment, over his bottle and pitcher, immersed in filth and mud, with scarcely decent apparel, generally wrapped up in a horseman's greatcoat, and, on the whole, with his very homely countenance and figure altogether exhibiting an object the most disgusting to the sight, if not to some other of the senses.

His poverty still increasing, he was even reduced so low as

to be destitute of a lodging, insomuch that he often passed his nights in those mean houses which are set open for casual wanderers, sometimes in cellars, amidst the riot and filth of the most profligate of the rabble, and not seldom would he walk the streets till he was weary, and then lie down (in summer) on a bulk, or (in winter) with his associates among the ashes of a glasshouse.

Yet, amidst all this penury and wretchedness had this man so much pride, so high an opinion of his own merit, that he ever kept up his spirits, and was always ready to repress, with scorn and contempt, the least appearance of any slight or indignity towards himself in the behaviour of his acquaintance, among whom he looked upon none as his superior, he *would* be treated as an equal even by persons of the highest rank! He refused to wait upon a gentleman who was desirous of relieving him when at the lowest ebb of distress, only because the message signified the gentleman's desire to see him at nine o'clock in the morning.

It was proposed by his friends that he should retire into Wales, with an allowance of 50*l* per annum, on which he was to live privately, in a cheap place, for ever quitting his town haunts.

In 1739 he set out for Swansey in the Bristol stage-coach, and was furnished with fifteen guineas to bear the expense of his journey, but, on the fourteenth day after his departure, his friends and benefactors, the principal of whom was no other than the great Mr. Pope, who expected to hear of his arrival in Wales, were surprised with a letter from Savage, informing them that he was yet upon the road, and could not proceed for want of money. There was no other remedy than a remittance, which was sent him, and by the help of which he was enabled to reach Bristol, from whence he was to proceed to Swansey by water. At Bristol, however, he found an embargo laid upon the shipping, so that he could not immediately obtain a passage. Here, therefore, being obliged to stay for some time, he, with his usual facility, so ingratiated himself with the principal inhabitants that he was frequently invited to their houses, distinguished at their public entertainments, and treated with a regard that highly gratified his vanity, and therefore easily engaged his affections. At length, with great reluctance,

he proceeded to Swansey, where he stayed about a year, very much dissatisfied with the diminution of his salary, for he had, in his letters, treated his contributors so insolently, that most of them withdrew their subscriptions. Here he finished his tragedy, and resolved to return with it to London, which was strenuously opposed by his great and constant friend Mr Pope, who proposed that Savage should put this play into the hands of Mr Thomson and Mr Mallet, in order that they might fit it for the stage. This kind and prudent scheme was rejected by Savage with the utmost contempt. He declared he would not submit his works to anyone's correction, and that he would no longer be kept in leading-strings. Accordingly he soon returned to Bristol in his way to London, but at Bristol meeting with a repetition of the same kind treatment he had before found there, he was tempted to make a second stay in that opulent city for some time. Here he was again not only caressed and treated, but the sum of 30*l* was raised for him, with which it had been happy if he had immediately departed for London, but he never considered that a frequent repetition of such kindness was not to be expected, and that it was possible to tire out the generosity of his Bristol friends, as he had before tired his friends everywhere else. In short, he remained here till his company was no longer welcome. His visits in every family were too often repeated; his wit had lost its novelty, and his irregular behaviour grew troublesome. Necessity came upon him before he was aware, his money was spent, his clothes were worn out, his appearance was shabby, and his presence was disgusting at every table. He stayed, in the midst of poverty, hunger, and contempt, till the mistress of a coffee-house, to whom he owed about 8*l*, arrested him for the debt. He remained for some time, at a great expense, in the house of the sheriff's officer, in hopes of procuring bail, which expense he was enabled to defray by a present of five guineas from Mr Nash at Bath. No bail, however, was to be found, so that poor Savage was at last lodged in Newgate, a prison so named, in Bristol.

But it was the fortune of this extraordinary mortal always to find more friends than he deserved. The keeper of the prison took compassion on him, and greatly softened the rigours of his confinement by every kind of indulgence; he

supported him at his own table, gave him a commodious room to himself, allowed him to stand at the door of the gaol, and even frequently took him into the fields for the benefit of the air and exercise, so that, in reality, Savage endured fewer hardships in this place than he had usually suffered during the greater part of his life

Here he wrote the satire entitled, "London and Bristol Compared," and in it he abused the inhabitants of the latter with such a spirit of resentment, that the reader would imagine he had never received any other than the most injurious treatment in that city.

He was seized with a disorder which at first was not suspected to be dangerous, but, growing daily more languid and dejected, at last a fever seized him, and he expired on the 1st of August, 1743, in the forty-sixth year of his age.

In 1725 we have a glimpse of a little picture—the veteran poet Southern, who had lingered on past his contemporaries, venturing to bring out a comedy called "Money, the Mistress." Says Victor :

I happened to be behind the scenes the first night of this comedy at Covent Garden, and was very sorry to find that the audience did not take the age, as well as the great merit of this author, into their consideration, and quietly dismiss this last weak effort to please them. When they were hissing dreadfully in the fifth act, Mr. Rich, who was standing by Mr. Southern, asked him if he heard what the audience were doing? His answer was, "No, sir, I am very deaf"

Mr. Oldys remembered Mr. Southern as "a grave and venerable old gentleman. He lived near Covent Garden, and used often to frequent the evening prayers there, always neat and decently dressed, commonly in black, with his silver sword and silver locks" Yet this was the author of the pathetic "Oronooko," and of the terrible "Fatal Marriage"—performed in the old days when William the Third was king.

Southern was born and educated in Dublin, and was one of the soldier dramatists, having served under the Duke of York,

like man, to whom dramatic writers are under serious obligation, as he was the first to methodise and put on a sound basis the question of authors' profits. For his "Spautan Fame," played brilliantly in 1719, by Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, he received from the booksellers 150*l*, then considered to be an immense sum. It is curious that in our day this taste for reading a play has departed, but it seems to have been the result of the monopoly, as all could not attend the theatres. Mr Dryden once took occasion to ask him how much he got by one of his plays, to which he answered that he was really ashamed to inform him. "But Mr Dryden being a little importunate to know, he plainly told him that by his last play he cleared 700*l*; which appeared astonishing to Dryden, as he himself had never been able to acquire more than 100*l* by his most successful pieces. The secret is, Southern was not beneath the drudgery of solicitation, and often sold his tickets at a very high price, by making applications to persons of distinction."

A few items as to authors' prices may be welcome. Cibber, for his play of "The Nonjuror," received a hundred guineas. For a fairly successful tragedy in the last century the booksellers gave from 50*l* to 80*l*. Dryden produced twenty-seven plays in twenty-five years, and received about 25*l* for each piece, and 70*l* for his benefit—a miserable dole. Indeed, the dreadful series of hack-writers, and their struggles, would make up a tale of suffering and troubles that seems incredible. Had Goldsmith lived he would probably have sunk into the most abject misery, and have been overwhelmed. A writer with such poetical talent, sunk in debt to the amount of 2000*l*, his brains mortgaged far in advance, could never have worked himself free. A long list of such unhappy dramatists could be made out—Bickerstaff, Dibdin, Evane, etc. Kit Smart is a type who superadded to his sorrows that of going mad and being confined in an asylum, where he wrote



## CHAPTER II.

### "THE BEGGAR'S OPERA"

IN the history of every theatre there have always been some eminently successful pieces, the production of which has brought not only prosperity but reputation. These occasions are unhappily few, but in certain instances they have been remarkable beyond the occasion, as endowing the stage with a permanent treasure. Among these may be counted the production of Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer," Sheridan's "Rivals" and "The School for Scandal," in a far lower degree, though quite as successful, "The Lady of Lyons," which may be considered the great "stock-pieces" of our stage. Perhaps, however, the greatest success of last century—on its production that is, making due allowance for the surrounding conditions—was "The Beggar's Opera"\*

The history of this piece is interesting and curious in every point of view, from the authors concerned, the wit displayed, and the fortunes of the actors.

Various "hands" were concerned in it. "Gay," says

\* It is curious that Boswell should have collected materials for a regular work on the subject, but he was not able to carry out his plan.

Mr Pope, "was inclined to try at such a thing for some time, but afterwards thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan. This was what gave rise to 'The Beggar's Opera' He began on it, and when first he mentioned it to Swift, the doctor did not like the project. As he carried it on, he showed what he wrote to both of us, and we, now and then, gave a correction, or a word or two of advice, but it was wholly of his own writing. When it was done, neither of us thought it would succeed. We showed it to Congreve, who, after reading it over, said, 'It would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly' "

"At Schomberg House, Pall Mall, was first concocted the dramatic scheme of this famous opera. It was originally proposed to Swift to name it the 'Newgate Opera' Swift delighted to quote his Devonshire pastorals, they being very characteristic of low rustic life, and congenial to his taste. Under the influence of such notions, he proposed to Gay to bestow his thoughts upon writing 'A Newgate Pastoral,' adding, 'And I will, *sub rosa*, afford you my best assistance' This scheme was talked over at Queensberry House, and Gay commenced it, but it was soon dropped. Another scheme—that for 'The Beggar's Opera'—was approved, and written forthwith, under the auspices of the duchess, and performed at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, under the immediate influence of her grace, who, to induce the manager, Rich, to bring it upon his stage, agreed to indemnify him all the expenses he might incur, provided that the daring speculation should fail. The offer had first been proposed to Fleetwood and his partners, at Drury Lane Theatre, but it was at once rejected by them as a piece that would not be tolerated by a public audience."

To this opera (says Kirkman, who must have had it from Macklin) there was no music originally intended to accompany

the songs, till Rich, the manager, suggested it on the second last rehearsal. The junto of wits, who regularly attended, one and all objected to it, and it was given up till the Duchess of Queensberry (Gay's staunch patroness) accidentally hearing of it, attended herself the next rehearsal, when it was tried and universally approved of. The first song, "The Modes of the Court," was written by Lord Chesterfield, "Virgins are like the fair flower in its lustre," by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, "When you censure the age," by Swift, and "Gamesters and lawyers are jugglers alike," *supposed* to be written by Mr. Fortescue, then Master of the Rolls.\*

The piece, however, after being touched up by Swift and Pope, was offered to various managers, who all peremptorily declined it. Nay, when it was taken to Rich in Lincoln's Inn Fields, he grew despondent about it during the rehearsal, and was inclined to give it up. "Indeed," says Victor, who must have had the account from him, "on the first night of performance its fate was doubtful for some time. The first act was received with silent attention, not a hand moved, at the end of which they rose, and every man seemed to compare notes with his neighbour, and the general opinion was in its favour. In the second act they broke their silence by marks of their approbation, to the great joy of the frightened performers as well as the author, and the last act was received with universal applause."

Macklin was present at the first representation of "The Beggar's Opera," and confirmed what has often been reported, that its success was doubtful till after the opening of the second act, when, after the chorus song of "Let us take the road," the applause was as universal as unbounded.

Pope was also present, and says "We were all, at the first night of it, in great uncertainty of the event, till we were very much encouraged by our hearing the Duke of Argyle,

\* "The above information came from the late Dowager Lady Townshend."

who sat in the next box to us, say. 'It will do—it must do—I see it in the eyes of them' This was a good while before the first act was over, and so gave us ease soon, for that duke, beside his own good taste, has as particular a knack as anyone now living in discovering the taste of the public. He was quite right in this, as usual, the good-nature of the audience appeared stronger and stronger in every act, and ended in a clamour of applause."

And among its ardent patrons were the well-known Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, she "ever fair and young." Their advocacy was indeed so marked that they were "forbid the Court," and, in consequence, the duke resigned his appointment. The lady wrote.

The Duchess of Queensberry is surprised and well pleased that the King has given her so agreeable a command as forbidding her the Court, where she never came for diversion, but to bestow a very great civility on the King and Queen. She hopes that by so unprecedented an order as this the King will see as few as he wishes at Court, particularly such as dare to think or speak the truth. I dare not do otherwise, and ought not, nor could I have imagined but that it would have been the highest compliment I could possibly pay the King and Queen, to support truth and innocence in their house.

C QUEENSBERRY

P.S.—Particularly when the King and Queen told me they had not read Mr Gay's play. I have certainly done them right to justify my own behaviour, rather than act like his Grace of —, who has neither made use of truth, honour, or judgment in this whole affair, either for himself or his friends.

This extraordinary being was recalled by the fencing-master, Angelo, who lived till the reign of George the Fourth. "I remember her," he says, "in her formal dress, her long stomacher, and short point-lace apron, and her grey locks combed smoothly over her cushion; and the duke, a tall, lean,

upright figure, attired in the costume of one of the old school, in his embroidered waistcoat, laced cocked hat, and whip, as represented in the sporting pictures of Wootton, the painter, in his Newmarket racers. I moreover recollect that her grace, though then very aged, appeared to have been a great beauty, and that the servants who waited at table were so many awfully-looking, silent, old-fashioned, liveried frumps."

They were, however, recalled to Court, and attended the coronation. An old housekeeper, Miss Shaites, described to Angelo their numerous visits to the theatre to support the new play, sending also the household nearly twenty times during its "run" of sixty-three nights—then, and I suppose for a hundred years later, a run that was unparalleled.

The incredible success of this opera was supposed to be entirely owing to the attacks on the Court.

The song of Peachum, the thief-taker, as originally written by Gay, was less severe. Pope altered the two last lines

The priest calls the lawyer a cheat,  
The lawyer be-knaves the divine,  
*And the statesman, because he's so great,  
Thinks his trade is as honest as mine*

These stood in Gay's manuscript.

And there's many arrive to be great,  
By a trade not more honest than mine

The line,

Since laws were made for every degree,

was Pope's also.

The cast was as follows :

Men : Peachum, Mr. Hyppesly ; Lockit, Mr. Hall ; Macheath, Mr. Walker, Filch, Mr. Clark ; Jemmy Twitcher, Mr. H. Bullock, Crook-fingered Jack, Mr. Houghton, Wat Dreary, Mr. Smith ; Robin of Bagshot, Mr. Lacy, Nimming

Ned, Mr Pitt, Harry Paddington, Mr Eaton; Mat of the Mint, Mr Spiller, Ben Budge, Mr Morgan, beggar, Mr Chapman, player, Mr Milward, constables, drawers, turn-keys, etc. Women Mrs Peachum, Mrs Martin, Polly Peachum, Miss Fenton, Lucy Lockit, Mrs Eggleton; Diana Trapes, Mrs Martin, Mrs Coaxer, Mrs Holiday, Dolly Trull, Mrs Lacy, Mrs Vixen, Mrs Rice, Betty Doxy, Mrs Rogers, Jenny Diver, Mrs Clark, Mrs Slamakin, Mrs Morgan, Suky Tawdry, Mrs Palin, Molly Brazen, Mrs Sallee

So famous a play made the very actors famous, notably Tom Walker, who played Macheath. Quin was first designed for this part, who barely sung well enough to give a convivial song in company. "The high reputation of Gay, however, and the critical junto who supported him, made him drudge through two rehearsals. On the close of the last, Walker was observed humming some of the songs behind the scenes, in a tone and liveliness of manner which attracted all their notice. Quin laid hold of this circumstance to get rid of the part, declaring that 'Walker was the man to do it'."

However, the applause he received and the attention he engaged from the gay young sparks of the town led him into habits of drinking.

"He seems to have been a really fine actor," says a good judge and artist himself—Davies. "He had from nature great advantages of voice and person. his countenance was manly and expressive; and his humour, ease, and gaiety, which he assumed in Macheath and other characters of this complexion, rendered him a great favourite with the public. He knew little scientifically of music other than singing a song in good ballad tune, but that singing was supported by a speaking eye and inimitable action. In Falconbridge," he adds, "though Garrick, Sheridan, Delane, and Barry have attempted it, they all fell short of the merits of Tom Walker. In him alone were found the several requisites for the character :

a strong and muscular person, a bold intrepid look, manly deportment, vigorous action, and a humour which descended to an easy familiarity in conveying a jest or sarcasm with uncommon poignancy When Falconbridge replies to Salisbury's taunt of galling him,

You had better gall the devil, Salisbury.  
If thou but frown on me, or stir thy foot,  
Or teach thy hasty spleen to do me shame,  
I'll strike thee dead,

Walker uttered these words with singular propriety, he drew his sword, threw himself into a noble attitude, sternly knit his black brows, and gave a loud stamp with his foot "

The usual result of histrionic debauchery followed, and Chetwood thus quaintly records his fate

He followed Bacchus too ardently, insomuch that his credit was often drowned upon the stage, and by degrees almost rendered him useless He was supposed author of two dramatic pieces, viz "The Quaker's Opera," and a tragedy called "The Fate of Villainy" This play he brought to Ireland in the year 1744, and prevailed on the proprietors to act it under the title of "Love and Loyalty" The second night was given out for his benefit, but, not being able to pay in half the charge of the common expenses, the doors were ordered to be kept shut, but I remember a few people came to ask the reason. However, I fear this disappointment hastened his death, for he survived it but three days, dying in the forty-fourth year of his age, a martyr to what often stole from him a good understanding.

He who delights in drinking out of season,  
Takes wond'rous pains to drown his manly reason.

The brilliant success of the company was, of course, the Polly Peachum of Lavinia Fenton Bred in a coffee-house, but having the simple charm of singing ballads, she appeared

at the Haymarket, and was drawn thence by Rich with a tempting offer of 15*s* a week, but on the astonishing success of the piece this was doubled. It was calculated that, according to the number of playing-nights in the season, this was worth no more than 45*l.* a year. She became the rage. The fan and print shops exhibited her pictures. The Duke of Bolton courted her ardently, and, it was believed, made her a promise of the succession to his wife. He gave out that he was first captivated by the plaintive and bewitching manner in which she gave the song, "O ponder well, be not severe." Not till twenty-three years after did the duchess depart this life, when the duke redeemed his engagement.

Macklin declared that the charm of her performance, and her dress, was its simplicity, "like that of a modern Quakeress." Dr. J. Warton, who met her at table, declares "she was a very accomplished and most agreeable companion, had much wit, good strong sense, and a just taste in polite literature. Her person was agreeable and well made, though I think she could never be called a beauty. I have had the pleasure of being at table with her, when her conversation was much admired by the first characters of the age, particularly old Lord Bathurst and Lord Granville. The original Polly only remained on the stage for the first season, and was succeeded by a Miss Warren, who was also carried off by an admirer. Miss Norris, Miss Falkner, Mrs. Chambers, Miss Brent (the most successful after the first), Mrs. Arne, Madame Mara, and Mrs. Cibber." Such was the line of Pollys.

Lucy was taken by a Mrs. Eggleton, the wife of an actor of that name. She attracted the praise of the Duke of Argyle, "who took a particular pleasure in seeing Miss Eggleton, and always spoke of her in the handsomest terms." However, she wanted prudence, and whether from herself or from the example of her husband, "she died enamoured of Bacchus."



Filch was undertaken by Nat Clarke, who was assisted by "a meagre countenance, a shambling gait, and a thorough knowledge of the slang language" He was a sort of "under harlequin" to Rich, to whom he had a resemblance, which gave rise to this whimsical incident

One of the actors having had some words with Clarke, during the representation of a pantomime, waited till he should find an opportunity of showing his resentment Unluckily, Rich being in the way of this angry person, as he came off the stage, he, thinking it was Clarke, struck him such a blow on the breast as for a time deprived him of the power of breathing The man instantly made every apology for his mistake. "But pray, Muster," says Rich, "what provocation could Clarke possibly give you to strike so hard?"

More disastrous was the end of another Clarke, Jeremiah, composer of one of the airs and a good musician. Conceiving a passion for a lady of high rank, he determined to destroy himself Borrowing a horse from a friend, he set off from London, he knew not whither. He went into a field, in the corner of which was a pond surrounded with trees, which pointed out to his choice two ways of getting rid of life Hesitating for some time which to take, he at last determined to leave it to chance, and taking a piece of money out of his pocket, tossed it up in the air to decide it The money, however, falling on its edge in the clay, seemed to forbid both ways of destruction, and it had such an effect upon him that he declined it for that time, and regaining his horse, rode to town.

His mind, however, was too much disordered to receive comfort, or take any advantage from the above omen; and after a few months, worn out in the utmost dejection of spirits, he shot himself in his own house in St Paul's Churchyard.

"Peachum was drawn from Jonathan Wild, the thief-taker, who had suffered death for his notorious villainies about three years before the production of this opera, and Peachum perusing his Tyburn list was nothing more than the daily practice of Wild Gay, however, by frequently comparing highwaymen to courtiers, aimed at Sir Robert Walpole, then Prime Minister In the scene where Peachum and Lockit are described settling their accounts, Lockit sings the song, 'When you censure the age,' etc, which had such an effect on the audience that, as if by instinct, the greater part of them threw their eyes on the stage-box, where the minister was sitting, and loudly *encored* it Sir Robert saw this stroke instantly, and saw it with good-humour, *encored* it a second time himself, joined in the general applause, and by this means brought the audience into so much good-humour with him that they gave him a general huzza from all parts of the house

"But notwithstanding this escape, every night, and for many years afterwards, that 'The Beggar's Opera' was brought out, Macklin used to say the minister never could with any satisfaction be present at its representation on account of the many allusions which the audience thought referred to his character The first song was thought to point to him, the name of Bob Booty, whenever mentioned, again raised the laugh against him; and the quairrelling scene between Peachum and Lockit was so well understood at that time to allude to a recent quarrel between the two ministers, Lord Townshend and Sir Robert, that the house was in convulsions of applause "

Such was the success of this remarkable piece, performed for a season ending June 19th \*

\* It is curious that even the amount of receipts should be shown The

characters that gave him infinite surprise and satisfaction. His curiosity was too prevalent to observe the height of good manners, therefore he made a pretence to go into the room, where he was struck dumb some time with her figure and blooming beauty, but was more astonished at her discourse and spightly wit. Mr. Farquhar pressed her to pursue her amusement, but was obliged to depart without that satisfaction.

Mr Wilks was at that time in Ireland, therefore he took some pains to acquaint Sir John Vanbrugh (who had some share in the theatre) with the jewel he had found thus by accident. It was some time before she would be prevailed upon. Though she has merrily told me, "I longed to be at it, and only wanted a little decent entreaties." Alinda, in "The Pilgrim," was the first part in which she was taken notice of, which Sir John Vanbrugh altered and revived upon her account, which is a character of different species of passions and variety, where she charmed the play into a run of many succeeding nights. I remember her in her full round of glory in comedy, she used to slight tragedy. She would often say, "I hate to have a page dragging my tail about. Why do they not give Porter these parts, she can put on a better tragedy face than I can?" When "Mithridates" was revived, it was with much difficulty she was prevailed upon to take the part, but she performed it to the utmost length of perfection, and after that she seemed much better reconciled to tragedy. What a majestical dignity in "Cleopatra!" and indeed in every part that required it, such a finished figure on the stage was never yet seen. In Calista, the fair penitent, she was imitable in the third act with Horatio, when she tears the letter with

To atoms! thus!

Thus let me tear the vile detested falsehood,  
The wicked lying evidence of shame!

Her excellent clear voice of passion, her piercing flaming eye, with manner and action suiting, used to make me think with awe, and seemed to put her monitor Horatio into a mouse-hole. I almost gave him up for a troublesome puppy, and though Mr. Booth played the part of Lothario, I could hardly lug him up to the importance of triumphing over such a

finished piece of perfection, that seemed to be too much dignified to lose her virtue. Even her blemishes seemed to lose that glare which appear round the persons of the failing fair, neither was it ever known she troubled the repose of any lady's lawful claim, and was far more constant than millions in the conjugal noose. She was of a superior height, but with a lovely proportion, and the dignity of her soul equal to her form and stature, made up of benevolent charity, affable and good-natured to all that deserved it. Mr Savage, son to the Earl Rivers, when he was persecuted by his unnatural mother, received from her ever-giving bountiful hand 50*l* a year during her life, and was, with Mr Wilks, a main means in saving him from an ignominious end.

The part of Sophonisba, a tragedy (by Mr. Thomson, famed for many excellent poems), was reputed the cause of her death, for in her execution she went beyond wonder to astonishment! From that time her decay came slowly on, and never left her till it conducted her to eternal rest the 23rd of October, 1730.

In short, it was pronounced to be Mrs Oldfield as Lady Betty, rather than Lady Betty by Mrs Oldfield; for Cibber's characters made her reputation, as he, indeed, testifies in one of his graphic dedications addressed to the Duke of Argyll. There he quotes a description of a contemporary comedian to the effect that "she was then (1727) in the highest excellence of action, just rising to that height where the graceful can only begin to show itself, of a lively aspect, and a command in her mien. Her voice was sweet, strong, piercing, and melodious, her pronunciation voluble, distinct, and musical. . . . She had one peculiar happiness from nature: she looked and maintained the agreeable at a time when other fine women only raise admirers by their understanding. The spectator was always as much informed by her eyes as by her elocution, for the look is the only proof that an actor rightly conceives what he utters." She succeeded to Mrs. Verbruggen's characters; but what really made her famous was

Lady Betty Modish, in Cibber's "Careless Husband" In this character the two qualities of the genteel and the elegant shone out to perfection, and was so admirably suited to her natural and agreeable manner of conversation, that almost every sentence may be said to have been heard from her own mouth before she uttered it.

Egerton, a small critic of the day, knew her well, and collected, in 1731, all he could about her From one Taylor, formerly a servant to Mr Rich, he gleaned the following as to her rise "Dining one day at her aunt's, who kept The Mitre, in St James's Market, Captain Farquhar heard Miss Fanny reading a play behind the bar with so proper an emphasis that he swore the gill was cut out for the stage When her mother next saw Captain Vanbrugh, she told him Captain Farquhar's opinion. Miss being called in, and asked what her fancy was—for tragedy or comedy, said Comedy. She was accordingly engaged at 15s a week. However, her agreeable figure and the sweetness of her voice soon gave her the preference, in the opinion of the whole town, to all the young actresses, and his Grace the Duke of Bedford being pleased to speak to Mr Rich in her favour, he instantly raised her allowance to 20s."

Mrs. Oldfield offers an extraordinary type of what the actress then was, and was, in her way, a remarkable woman. She was "recommended to the stage" in 1699. She made her first impression as Lady Betty Modish, as we have seen, in the year 1704 "Mrs. Oldfield was in person tall, genteel, and well shaped, her countenance pleasing and expressive, enlivened with large speaking eyes, which, in some particular comic situations, she kept half shut, especially when she intended to give effect to some brilliant or gay thought. In sprightliness of air and elegance of manner she excelled all actresses; and was greatly superior in the clear, sonorous, and harmonious tones of her voice."

By being a welcome and constant visitor to families of distinction, Mrs. Oldfield acquired an elegant and graceful deportment in representing women of high rank. She expressed the sentiments of Lady Betty Modish and Lady Townly in a manner so easy, natural, and flowing, and so like to her common conversation, that they appeared to be her own genuine conception. The former character has been universally said to be her *ne plus ultra* in acting. She slid so gracefully into the foibles, and displayed so humorously the excesses of a fine woman, too sensible of her charms, too confident of her power, and led away by her passion for pleasure, that no succeeding Lady Townly arrived at her many distinguished excellences in that character. Mrs. Heion, her successor, and the beautiful Mrs. Woffington, came nearest to her. She was introduced to Christopher Rich by Sir John Vanbrugh. She lived successively the friend and mistress of Arthur Manwaring, Esq., one of the most accomplished men of his age, and General Churchill. Notwithstanding these connections were publicly known, she was invited to the houses of women of fashion, as much distinguished for unblemished character as elevated rank. The royal family did not disdain to see Mrs. Oldfield at their levees. George II. and Queen Caroline, when Prince and Princess of Wales, often condescended to converse with her.

She is best remembered by the well-known lines of Pope, beyond question accepted as applying to her.

Odious ! in woollen ! 'twould a saint provoke !  
 Were the last words which poor Narcissa spoke.  
 No ! let a charming chintz and Brussels lace  
 Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face.  
 One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead ;  
 And, Betty, give this cheek a little red.

“What was the particular cause of his spite to her—he even describes her conversation contemptuously in his ‘Art of Smiling’—it is hard to discover. Professional satirists are often directed in their dislikes by humour.”

The Duke of Bedford was a patron of the drama, and,

according to the mild phrase of the day, had "taken" a Miss Campion "off the stage," a girl of seventeen, who was presently cut off in her bloom by a hectic fever, under which she languished four months. This was in 1706, and his grace, who seems to have had the odd notion of morals and piety by which historians so often extenuate their failings, "put up a neat tablet and a Latin inscription alluding to the *virtues* of the mind" for which the deceased was remarkable. It was thus anglicised

Though meanly born her morals were sincere,  
 And such as the most noble blood might wear !  
 Some years the stage her sprightly action graced,  
 Most others in her conduct she surpassed  
 Sacred to her most dear remains be 't known,  
 His Grace of Devon consecrates this stone

The duke gave her a prayer-book, and was good enough to write on the flyleaf a little system of natural religion. The patron himself died about a year later, and was panegyrised in a funeral sermon by Dr Kennet. Altogether a most singular episode. But to return to Mrs Oldfield

She presently attracted the notice of Mr Maynwaring, a man of wit and parts, and whose company was much sought, the friend, too, of Marlborough and Godolphin, and who also was fond of the green-room, writing prologues, etc. Between her and this gentleman "a strict" alliance and friendship commenced. On the well-known revolt from Rich taking place she joined Vanbrugh at the Haymarket, and though there were three great actresses in possession of the town, she succeeded in driving off Bracegirdle. When she retired to Drury Lane, Thomson's "*Sophonisba*" was put in rehearsal, and Mrs. Rogers was to have had what is now vulgarly called the title-rôle; but the author and his friends at once felt that Mrs Oldfield was best suited to the part. On which the

discarded favourite raised a host of profligates, fond of tumult and riot, who made such a commotion in the house that the Court sent four of the royal messengers and a guard to suppress all disorders.

In 1712, Mr Maynwaring was seized with an illness arising from a chill caught by attending on her Grace of Marlborough in her gardens. This turned to consumption. He had, in truth, lived too hard, and he wished to reform, but it was too late, "for his company was so much the delight of the great, the fair, and the gay, that he was very little at home. He drank freely, and as his wines were generally champagne and burgundy, it was to their *corrosive qualities* that he imputed the state of health he was fallen into." His last sufferings were, however, comforted by visits from the Queen herself, who wept at his bedside. In November, 1712, he expired in the arms of his servant, Wood, "now treasurer of Lincoln's Inn Fields."

Mrs Oldfield was remarkable as having acted in all the *chef-d'œuvres* of Cibber and Steele.

The account of her last illness is as curious as her life. "She earnestly asked her doctors to tell her the truth, and when they said 'they feared the fatality of it,' she answered, without the least shock or emotion, that 'she acquiesced in the lot Providence had assigned her. She would bear her afflictions patiently.' She then set her house in order. After six months' languishment, she died on October 23rd, 1730." Her friend, Mrs. Sanders, who attended her all through, and was left a small annuity, bewailed her. Writing to Mr Egerton: "Her funeral I never heard her once mention, but Christian fortitude she had sufficient, for though she had no priest, she did the office of one to the last. It may be justly said she prayed without ceasing. She was all goodness. The best of daughters, the best of mothers, and the best of friends. Oh, that I had words to sound forth her praises!"



Connected with this death of the once-favoured actress Oldfield there were some odd incidents. Never was a life conducted in defiance of all the respectable rules required by society so honoured at its close. As the nicety of dress was her delight when living, she was as nicely dressed after her decease, being, by Mrs Sanders's direction, thus laid in her coffin. She had on a very fine Brussels lace headdress, a holland shift, with tuckers and double ruffles of the same lace, and a pair of new kid gloves. On Tuesday, the 27th, her body was carried from her house in Grosvenor Street to her funereal chamber. The pall was supported by Lord Delawar, Lord Harvey, and other noblemen. The inscription on her tomb ran

HIC JACET ANNE OLDFIELD

JAM MEA PERACTA EST

VOS PLAUDITE

She was buried in Westminster Abbey, though it was proposed by those who were naturally scandalised at such an honour being paid to a woman of questionable life, to lay hold of an obsolete Popish canon, "No stage-players;" "but I have been assured by Dr Barker himself that he buried Mrs. Oldfield very willingly and with the greatest satisfaction."

Her effects were sold by auction, and the catalogue gives a good idea of her nice taste. "The collection contained medals, gold and silver, marble family 'bustos'; a dog, curiously performed in marble, finely-carved gems; many fine portraits—one of Lord Essex, by Holbein, others by Vandyke and Kneller; some costly jewels, a necklace with thirty-seven garnets, and a diamond in each, a fine large pearl necklace, a brilliant weighing eleven-and-a-half grains, a diamond necklace of thirty-four brilliants; five brilliant crochets; brilliant earrings, etc. She had, besides, a pretty collection of books."

But, indeed, this season was to be remarkable for the abandonment of the stage by a truly brilliant actress, an incident not unattended with a display of spirit, for most of these tragedy-queens were women of a fine character and spirit, which, as we have seen, make them actually figures in the tapestry of their times Mountfort, Oldfield, Bracegirdle, Woffington—all inspired brilliant pens. Of these, Cibber's description has been well described as "surpassing," and by most is considered his masterpiece On Bracegirdle he is silent, it is said owing to her being still living as he wrote, which, however, would not hinder a well-deserved compliment It was a singular thing to find a woman of such gifts, and in the flush of her popularity, withdrawing from the stage. This was owing to a mortification the high-spirited actress experienced. A dispute arose between her and Mrs. Oldfield as to which would do best in comedy, and this was so warmly contested that it was agreed to refer the decision "to the town" The two ladies accordingly acted a comedy part—Mrs Bittle—in succession, and the judges inclined to Mrs. Oldfield This, with giving the preference to that lady in the matter of a benefit, so affronted Mrs Bracegirdle that she determined to withdraw altogether from the stage

The stage, perhaps, never produced four such handsome women at once as Mrs Barry, Mrs Bracegirdle, Mrs. Mountfort, and Mrs. Bowman When they appeared together in the last scene of "The Old Bachelor," the audience was struck with so fine a group of beauties

Tony Aston has left a sketch of her, full of pleasing, even fascinating touches, showing a wonderful power of discrimination in a buffoon of so gross a description. Goes on Aston:

Mrs Bracegirdle, that Diana of the stage, hath many places contending for her birth The most received opinion is that she was the daughter of a coachman, coachmaker, or

letter-out of coaches in Northampton. But I am inclinable to my father's opinion (who had a great value for her reported virtue), that she was a distant relative, and came out of Staffordshire, from about Walsall or Wolverhampton. She was very shy of Lord Lovelace's company, as being an engaging man, who drest well, and, as every day his servant came to her, to ask how she did, she always returned her answer in the most obeisant words and behaviour, "That she was indifferent well, she humbly thanked his lordship." She was of a lovely height, with dark-brown hair and eyebrows, black sparkling eyes, and a fresh blushy complexion, and, whenever she exerted herself, had an involuntary flushing in her breast, neck, and face, having continually a cheerful aspect, and a fine set of white even teeth, never making an exit but that she left the audience in an imitation of her pleasant countenance. Genteel comedy was her chief essay, and that too when in men's clothes, in which she far surmounted all the actresses of that and this age. Yet she had a defect—scarcely perceptible—viz the right shoulder a little portended, which, when in men's clothes, was covered by a long or campaign peruke. She was finely shaped, and had very handsome legs and feet, and her gait or walk was free, manlike, and modest when in breeches.

The following odd incident occurred to her

Some nobles extolling her, the Duke of Dorset and Lord Halifax deposited two hundred guineas, and the rest made up eight hundred, and sent it to her, with encomiums upon her virtue.

She was, when on the stage, diurnally charitable; going often into Clare Market, and giving money to the poor unemployed basket-women, insomuch that she could not pass that neighbourhood without the thankful acclamations of people of all degrees; so that if any person had affronted her they would have been in danger of being killed directly; and yet the good woman was an actress. She has been off the stage these twenty-six years or more, but was alive July 20th, 1747, for I saw her in the Strand, London, then with the remains of charming Bracegirdle.

There was another lady of the company, Mrs Mountfort, whose husband, it will be recollected, perished in the miserable street scuffle with Lord Mohun. She was now Mrs. Verbruggen, having married "Jack" of that name, who, as Tony Aston describes him, "will salute you next."

That rough diamond shone more bright than all the artful polished brilliants that ever sparkled on our stage. He had the words perfect at one view, and nature directed 'em into voice and action, in which last he was always pleasing—his person being tall, well built and clean, only he was a little in-kneed, which gave him a shambling gait, which was a carelessness, and became him. When Mr. Betterton played Brutus with him, then you might behold the grand contest, Verbruggen wild and untaught or Betterton in the trammels of construction. Nature was so predominant that his second thoughts never altered his prime performance. In "The Rover," never were more beautiful scenes than between him and Miss Biacegirdle, in her character of Helena, for what with Verbruggen's untaught airs and her smiling repartees, the audience were afraid they were going off the stage every moment. He was nature without extravagance.

But his charming wife kindles Tony's enthusiasm.

She was all art, but dressed so nice, it looked like nature. There was not a look or motion but what were all designed; and these at the same word, period, occasion, incident, were every night in the same character alike; and yet all sat charmingly easy on her. Her face, motion, etc changed at once. But the greatest and usual position was laughing, flirting her fan, and *je ne sçais quoi*, with a kind of affected twitter. She was very loath to accept of the part of Neldon, in "Oronooko," and that with just reason, as being obliged to put on men's clothes—having thick legs and thighs—but yet the town (that respected her) compounded and received her with applause; for she was the most pleasant creature that ever appeared. Adding to these, that she was a fine fair woman, plump, full featured, her face of a fine smooth oval, full of beautiful, well-disposed

moles on it, and on her neck and breast. Whatever she did was not to be called acting, no, no, it was what she represented, she was neither more nor less, and was the most easy actress in the world. Her maiden name was Percival. Melanthe was her masterpiece. She was the best conversationalist possible; never captious, or displeased at anything but what was gross or indecent, for she was cautious lest fiery Jack should so resent it as to breed a quarrel. For he would often say, "*Dammee! tho' I don't much value my wife, yet nobody shall affront her, by —,*" and his sword was drawn on the least occasion, which was much in fashion at the latter end of King William's reign.

These extracts—from a work little known and scarce—give a picture of the players of the time.

That earliest trial, the assassination of her husband, was accompanied with yet another; for her father was tried and sentenced, and "under this affliction she was introduced to Queen Mary, who being, as she was pleased to say, struck to the heart upon receiving the petition, granted all that was in her power—a remission of the execution for transportation. But her father was so weakened by his imprisonment that he was taken sick on the road and died at Portsmouth."

Nor did the adventures of the family end here. She left a daughter, Susanna; and Mr. Booth, having become one of her admirers, they were induced, in 1714, to try their fortune together in the State lottery and share the issue. A prize of 5000*l* came up to one of Miss Mountfort's tickets, and the actor was pressed by his friend to claim his half, but he never could be prevailed on to do so, declaring that it was a mere verbal agreement, and since it was her own good fortune she should enjoy it all. However, it happened that she lent, or, as it was phrased, Mr. Booth "took charge of a sum of 3200*l* for some years, which, on a quarrel and her selecting another admirer, he repaid, and a legal release and receipt drawn

up, dated January 21st, 1718, signed in the presence of six witnesses, was the unromantic conclusion of this business " Mr Booth's marriage with the dancer Hester Santlow followed All the money was soon squandered, and the unhappy woman was to close her adventurous life in want

Miss Bellamy says she heard this story of Miss Mountfort told by Colley Cibber himself, down at Bushy, Lord Tyrawley's estate.

On her was the justly-celebrated and well-known ballad of "Black-eyed Susan" written by Mr Gay Lord Berkeley's partiality for this lady induced him to leave her at his decease 300*l* a year, on condition that she never married. He likewise purchased Cowley for her, and she besides received from him at times very considerable sums. After this she fell in love with that very capital actor Mr Booth, but the desire of retaining her annuity prevented her from being joined in the bands of wedlock with the lover whom she preferred to numbers that were candidates for her favour. Mrs Vanbruggen had contracted an intimacy with Miss Santlow, a lady celebrated as a dancer, and esteemed a tolerable actress She was the declared favourite of Secretary Craggs, through whose liberality she became possessed of a fortune sufficient to enable her to live independent of the stage. What Mrs Vanbruggen could not effect, Miss Santlow did. Mr Booth, transferring his attention from the former to the latter, soon obtained possession both of her person and fortune Mrs. Vanbruggen no sooner heard of the perfidy of her lover and the ingratitude of her friend, than she gave way to a desperation that deprived her of her senses. In this situation she was brought from Cowley to London, that the best advice might be procured for her. As during the most violent paroxysms of her disorder she was not outrageous, and now and then a ray of reason beamed through the cloud that overshadowed her intellects, she was not placed under any rigorous confinement, but suffered to go about the house. One day, during a lucid interval, she asked her attendant what play was to be performed that evening, and was told that it was "Hamlet." In this piece, while she had been on the

stage, she had always met with great applause in the character of Ophelia. The recollection struck her, and, with that cunning which is usually allied to insanity, she found means to elude the care of her servants, and got to the theatre, where, concealing herself till the scene in which Ophelia was to make her appearance in her insane state, she pushed on the stage before her rival, who played the character that night, and exhibited a far more perfect representation of madness than the utmost exertions of mimic art could do. She was, in truth, Ophelia herself, to the amazement of the performers as well as of the audience. Nature having made this last effort, her vital powers failed her. On her going off, she prophetically exclaimed, "It is all over!" and, indeed, that was soon the case, for as she was conveying home (to make use of the concluding lines of another sweet ballad of Gay's, wherein her fate is so truly described), "She, like a hly drooping, then bowed her head and died."

Another critic and actor, whose style was characteristic, and whom we have often quoted, was Tony Aston, who may be thus amusingly introduced by the prompter Chetwood

This person, Mr Antony Aston,\* commonly called Tony, was bred an attorney in England, but having a smattering of wit and humour he left the study of the law for parts on the stage. He strained forth a comedy which was acted on the theatre in Smock Alley, called "Love in a Hurry," but with no success. He played in all the theatres in London, but never continued long in any, his way of living was peculiar to himself and family, resorting to the principal cities and towns in England with his "Medley," as he called it, which consisted of some capital scenes of humour out of the most celebrated plays. His company were generally composed of his own family—himself, his wife, and son; between every scene a song or dialogue of his own composition filled up the chinks of the slender meal. He pretended a right to every town he

\* "Tony Aston," published about 1750. Mr Reed writes in his copy, in 1795 "Though I have possessed this pamphlet twenty-five years, it is remarkable that I have never seen another copy of it." The author of the present work has seen one.

entered, and if a company came to any place where he exhibited his compositions, he would use all his art to evacuate the place of these interlopers as he called them. He was never out of his way, for if he met with a sightly house when he was itinerant, he would soon find the name, title, and circumstances of the family, curry them over with his humorous veise, and by that means get something to bear his charges to his next station. His finances, like those of kingdoms, were sometimes at the tide of flood, and as often at low ebb. In one, where his stream had left the channel dry, yet ready to launch out on a trading voyage without a cargo or provisions, he called up his landlord, to whom there was something due, told him of his losses in his present voyage, and being sent for to another place, desired he would lend him a small sum upon his wardrobe (which he showed him in a large box), ten times the value of the debt owing or the sum borrowed. The honest landloid, seeing a proper security, easily complied, gave him the sum demanded, locked up the trunk, put the key in his pocket, and retired. But as no vessel can make a voyage without sails and other proper materials, he had contrived a false bottom to this great box, took out the stuffing, and, by degrees, sent off his wardrobe by his emissaries unperceived. And that the weight should not detect him, he filled up the void with cabbage-stalks, bricks and stones cloathed in rags to prevent moving, when the vehicle was to be taken the next morning into the landlord's custody. Everything succeeded to his wish, and away went Tony, but far wide of the place he mentioned to mine host. I only mention this little story to let the reader know the shifts the itinerant gentry are sometimes put to. For Tony, when his finances were in order, and cured of the consumption, honestly paid him. I have had this tale both from Tony and the landlord, who then kept the Black Boy Inn at Chelmsford in Essex.

If Tony by chance ever came to a town where a company of showmen (as people oft call them) had got in before him, he presently declared war with them, and his geneial conditions of peace were that they should act a play for his benefit, that he might leave the siege and march with his small troop to some other place. And as he was a peison of humour, and a proper assurance, he generally, like a cat, skimmed off the fat



cream and left the lean milk to those that stayed behind I believe he is travelling still, and is as well known in every town as the post-horse that carries the mail.

Yet this eminent joker, thus happily touched, could himself portray the characters of other members of his craft

Tony Aston, from Bath, most humbly gives notice to the quality and gentry that he hath brought to town, from Wales, an admirable curiosity, viz a mock voice, never heard in London before He imitates with his voice domestic animals, as cocks, hens, ducks, turkey cocks and turkey hens, swans, horses, dogs, also ravens, lapwings, sea-fowl, sheep, lambs, bulls, cows, cats, etc, and that too after a comical manner, following them through their different passions, as surprise, fear, anger, etc, in their eating, walking, converse To be heard at The Globe and Duke of Marlborough's Head Tavern, in Fleet Street, at a minute's warning, from nine in the morning till nine at night. Any person of quality, or others, may command him to their house, etc, by sending word to the place above

NOTE —Tony Aston's medley, consisting of select parts of comedies, new songs, prologues, Mr Purcell's, and other comical English dialogues, is performed every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, at the place above, beginning at six o'clock Pit 1s 6d Being new last night.

A good idea of these clowns on the stage and buffoons off it, may be gathered from the account of Joe Trefusis

Mr Joseph Trefusis was the original Trapland in "Love for Love," and a well-esteemed low comedian (a theatrical term to distinguish that branch from the genteel), and was famous for dancing an awkward country clown He was an experienced angler. As he was fishing by the Liffy side, some friends of his were going in a boat in order to embark for England Jo seeing them, called to them to take him in that he might see them safe on board. He gave his fishing-rod to a friend on shore to take care of till his return, but Jo, it seems, was

prevailed upon by his companions to make the journey to London with them, with his fishing-clothes upon his back, not a second shirt, and but 7s. in his pocket. His companions left him in London, and Mr. Wilks found him gazing at the dial in the square of Covent Garden. He hardly knew him at first (as Mr Wilks told me) but by his particular gait, which was beyond imitation. When he asked him how he came there, and in that pickle "Hum! ha! why, faith, Bobby," replied Jo, "I only came from Dublin to see what it was a clock at Covent Garden." However, Mr Wilks new clothed him, supplied him with money, and sent him back, as mentioned in the above letter, before he received Mr Ashbury's letter to supply him.

Jo was so inimitable in dancing the clown, that General Ingoldsby was so well pleased that he sent him five guineas from the box where he sat. Jo dressed himself the next day, and went to the castle to return thanks. The general was hard to be persuaded it was the same person; but Jo soon convinced him by saying, "Ise the very mon, and please your Excellency," and at the same time twirling his hat, as he did in the dance, with his consummate foolish face and scrape. "Nay, now I am convinced," replied the general, laughing, "and thou shalt not show such a face for nothing here"—so gave Jo five guineas more, which so well pleased him, that he paid his compliments in his awkward clownish manner, and, as Shakespeare says, set the table on a roar. So exit Jo.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CLOSE OF THE CIBBER, BOOTH, AND WILKS MANAGEMENT.

IN the year 1731, Drury Lane witnessed the production of a capital stock-play, "George Barnwell," by Lillo. This author was a London jeweller, who was "strongly attached to the Muses, yet seemed to have laid it down as a maxim, that the devotion paid to them ought always to tend to the promotion of virtue, religion, and morality." Notwithstanding this proper principle, he had some eccentricity or simple-mindedness.

Towards the latter part of his life (says Mr. Davies, his editor), Mr Lillo, whether from judgment or humour, determined to put the sincerity of his friends, who professed a very high regard for him, to a trial. He asked one of his intimate acquaintance to lend him a considerable sum of money, and for this he declared he would give no bond, nor any other security except a note of hand. The person to whom he applied, not liking the terms, civilly refused him.

Soon after, Lillo met his nephew, Mr Underwood, with whom he had been at variance for some time. He put the same question to him, desiring him to lend him money upon the same terms. His nephew, either from a sagacious apprehension of his uncle's real intention, or from generosity of spirit, immediately offered to comply with his request. Lillo was so well pleased with this ready compliance of Mr. Underwood,

that he immediately declared that he was fully satisfied with him, and made him his heir

When the day of performance arrived, the critics and other enemies, hearing that the play was founded on an old ballad of the name, went and purchased it, and took it with them to the theatre, meaning to compare it, but it was found so pathetic that they had to drop their ballad to use their handkerchief instead. It was said that thousands of the ballads were sold, and Mr Wilks, at the request of the Queen, carried down the MS to Hampton Court, for Her Majesty's perusal. It was acted twenty nights running to crowded houses, and in the hottest season of the year. It is, in truth, an interesting and pathetic play, and, if acted by performers of dignity and pathos, would now hold audiences \*. As stated before, it came to be selected as the standing performance for Boxing-night, when London apprentices, having a holiday to go to the theatre, might receive awful warning as to the fate of those who rob their masters †. In connection with this, Ross, the actor, related the following curious experience

In the year 1752, during the Christmas holidays, I played George Barnwell, and the late Mrs Pritchard played Milwood. Dr. Barrowby, physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, told me he was sent for by a young gentleman in Great St Helen's, apprentice to a very capital merchant. He found him very ill with a slow fever, a heavy hammer pulse, that no medicine could touch. The nurse told him he sighed at times so very heavily, that she was sure something lay heavy on his mind. After much solicitation on the part of the doctor, the youth confessed there was something lay heavy at his heart. After

\* It was lately revived by Mr Hollingshead, with the view, as he confessed, of ridiculing what he drolly styled "the palmy day pieces." But even under such conditions, and though indifferently acted, it was hard to resist its genuine pathos.

† This device has occurred to some of our modern managers—witness the tale of "The Repentant Jockey," placarded at length to induce the public to visit some sporting drama.

this, he told the doctor he was the second son to a gentleman of good fortune in Hertfordshire, that he had made an acquaintance with a mistress of a captain of an Indiaman, then abroad, that he was within a year of being out of his time, and had been intrusted with cash, drafts, and notes, which he had made free with, to the amount of 200*l*. That going two or three nights before to Drury Lane, to see Ross and Mrs Pritchard, in their characters of George Barnwell and Milwood, he was so forcibly struck, he had not enjoyed a moment's peace since, and wished to die, to avoid the shame he saw hanging over him. The doctor asked where his father was. He replied he expected him there every minute, as he was sent for by his master upon his being taken so very ill. The doctor desired the young gentleman to make himself perfectly easy, as he would undertake his father should make all right, and, to get his patient in a promising way, assured him, if his father made the least hesitation, he should have the money of *him*. The father soon arrived. The doctor took him into another room, and, after explaining the whole cause of his son's illness, begged him to save the honour of his family and the life of his son. The father, with tears in his eyes, gave him a thousand thanks, said he would step to his banker and bring the money. While the father was gone, Dr Barrowby went to his patient, and told him everything would be settled in a few minutes, to his ease and satisfaction, that his father was gone to his banker for the money, and would soon return with peace and forgiveness, and never mention or even think of it more. What is very extraordinary, the doctor told me, that in a few minutes after he communicated this news to his patient, upon feeling of his pulse, without the help of any medicine, he was quite another creature. The father returned with notes to the amount of 200*l*, which he put into the son's hands—they wept, kissed, embraced. The son soon recovered, and lived to be a very eminent merchant. Dr. Barrowby never told me the name, but the story he mentioned often in the green-room of Drury Lane Theatre; and, after telling it one night when I was standing by, he said to me: "You have done some good in your profession, more, perhaps, than many a clergyman who preached last Sunday"—for the patient told

the doctor the play raised such horror and contrition in his soul, that he would, if it would please God to raise a friend to extricate him out of that distress, dedicate the rest of his life to religion and virtue. Though I never knew his name, or saw him to my knowledge, I had for nine or ten years, at my benefit, a note sealed up, with ten guineas, and these words "*A tribute of gratitude from one who was highly obliged and saved from ruin, by seeing Mr Ross's performance of Barnwell*"—I am, dear sir, yours truly,

DAVID ROSS.

Hampstead, 20th August, 1787.

There is a list of the salaries given to the chief performers under this management for the year 1729.

Booth and Wilks had each a fourth of the profits, amounting to 1000*l*, besides 10*l* a week for management. The others had as follows

	£	s.	d
Wilks, for acting and management . . .	753	6	8
Clear benefit . . . . .	60	0	0
Mrs Oldfield, 12 guineas a week to end of April	420	0	0
Benefit . . . . .	60	0	0
A present . . . . .	42	10	0
Mrs Porter, salary . . . . .	266	1	0
Clear benefit . . . . .	60	0	0
Mills, sen. . . . .	200	0	0
Benefit . . . . .	60	0	0
Thurmond . . . . .	166	0	0
A benefit paying 40 <i>l</i> . . . . .	20	0	0
	<hr/> <hr/>		
	£3746	13	4

At last, however, this favoured era was to come to an end, and it is always curious to note how the decay, as in a Ministry, invariably comes about, though it is remarkable that, in the history of every theatre, eras of prosperity and decay seem to come alternately—in fact, the continued prosperity becomes monotonous, and, as people were tired of hearing the good and

pious called just, so they grow indifferent to what is really of merit. Even Garrick's long and successful era was to show these signs of change.

The first cause that for some years had led the way to greater, was the continued ill state of health that rendered Booth incapable of appearing on the stage. The next was the death of Mis Oldfield. About the same time too, Mrs Porter, then in her highest reputation for tragedy, was lost to us by the misfortune of a dislocated limb, from the overturning of a chaise. And our last stroke was the death of Wilks, in September the year following, 1731.

Whatever were the causes, our audiences were far less abated than our apprehensions had suggested. It happened that our surviving fraternity having got some chimerical, and, as I thought, unjust notions into their heads, the remaining partner was naturally anxious to retire. I chose not, at my time of day, to enter into new contentions, and, as I found an inclination in some of them to purchase the whole power of the patent into their own hands, I did my best, while I stayed with them, to make it worth their while to come up to my price, and then patiently sold out my share.

The deaths and retirements alluded to by Cibber, though the artists in question had virtually withdrawn from the stage, were a serious loss. So long as an actor lives, his name, by a pleasant delusion, seems to lend a sort of help, or *prestige*, to the stage.

During Booth's inability to act, which lasted from 1729 till his death, 1733, Wilks was called upon to play two of his parts, Jaffier, and Lord Hastings in "Jane Shore". Booth was, at times, in all other respects except his power to go on the stage, in good health, and went amongst the players for his amusement. His curiosity drew him to the playhouse on the nights when Wilks acted these characters, in which himself had appeared with uncommon lustre. All the world admired Wilks, except his brother-manager. amidst the repeated bursts of applause, which he extorted, Booth alone continued silent.

If these anecdotes (says Davies) are worth perusal, the reader owes them to Benjamin Victor, who, many years since, related them to me.

What a curious picture of theatrical jealousy is here shown !

In the year 1727 (says Theo Cibber), early in the acting season, Booth had been seized with a violent fever, which lasted forty-six days without intermission. He was attended by Dr. Freind and Dr. Broxholm, gentlemen very eminent in their profession. They declared that he was delirious but two nights and one day, notwithstanding an ill-natured false report of his being mad the whole time of his illness. An anonymous biographer has informed us (adds Theo in his characteristic style), in a thing he calls "The Life of Booth," that this gentleman afterwards run mad, and frequently, in his frantic fits, acted the mock-monarch with his servants, and exercised an imaginary tyrannic power over them. An impudent, impertinent falsehood, crammed in by the author, who, 'tis probable, had no knowledge of him, but rather than not say something, would say nothing.

But in 1731 his illness, a most perilous stroke of fate on the theatre, returned soon after his playing King Henry VIII. He was then studying the part of Julio in "The Double Falsehood." He rehearsed it several times. When the play was ready for acting, he was prevented appearing in it by a relapse into his former indisposition. The part was supplied a few nights by Mr. Charles Williams (a promising player, who died young), to whom Mr. Booth had given the part to study, as doubting the certainty of his being able to appear in it himself. But, at Mr. Theobald's entreaty, backed by many gentlemen and ladies, he good-naturedly, but fatally, disregarded his indisposition, which was then an intermitting fever, and acted that part from the fifth to the twelfth night, which was, alas ! the last time of his appearance on the stage. During the course of his illness his fever turned to an inveterate jaundice. Then Dr. Mead was sent for, by whose advice Mr. Booth went to Bath, and remained there eleven weeks, but found no benefit, so returned to London. Three weeks after he embarked with his lady for Ostend, fancying the sea-sickness



might assist in the cure of his jaundice From Ostend he went through Flanders to Antwerp, and purposed to make the tour of Holland, personally to consult Dr Boerhaave, to whom Mr Booth's case had before been transmitted, but his fever returned so severely that he was confined to his bed almost every other day, and found himself under a necessity to return immediately to England He continued a long time in a dangerous condition He had a succession of violent fevers, and was often tormented with the most painful cholics. Yet, during their intermission, his spirits were lively and his voice strong His friends had frequent flattering hopes of his recovery, particularly in the year 1731 On his taking a house at Hampstead, his fever so much abated he became capable of receiving visits from his friends, and entertaining them with his usual good sense and cheerful politeness But vain were all their hopes His illness never quite forsook him, his jaundice appeared again, and a violent periodical cholic harassed him for near six months before he died, which was on Tuesday, May 8th, 1733 About a month before his death there appeared some symptoms of his recovery, and as I was then joint manager with him, he would sometimes talk to me of what characters he purposed to revive in the ensuing season, and plan other operations for our next winter theatrical campaign He unhappily was snatched from the stage in the prime and vigour of life, for, when he last appeared thereon, he was but in the forty-sixth year of his age He died possessed of a very large fortune, part in the funds, besides a good estate in the country, and another in Westminster, which latter is known by the names of Barton, Booth, and Cowley Streets By his will he made his widow sole heir and executrix

Such is the agreeable, interesting account given by one who served under him.

Only a short time before his death we find this excellent player writing a letter, whose singular courtesy and good feeling shows how worthy he was of the esteem in which he was held :

SIR,—When I desired the favour of seeing you this evening, I had forgot that I had appointed a gentleman to hear his tragedy read at y<sup>e</sup> same time. A messenger came to me this morning to put me in mind of the appointment. As the gentleman proposes to have his play acted (if it be approved of) before Xmas, I hope you will excuse my deferring the pleasure of hearing yours till to-morrow, or any other day, and hour, you please to appoint. I am downright ashamed of my forgetfulness, but if you knew what hurry our theatrical affairs have been in of late, you would the more readily excuse, sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant, .

B. BOOTH

Sunday Morning, 5th Nov, 1732.

Another cause of decay and breaking up in the theatre was the retirement of Wilks, that good and much-admired player.

Nothing is more pleasing in this history than to find such a character as was Wilks, generous itself and generously appreciated by all who knew him. Says his friend Chetwood

His purse was ever open to proper objects of charity, and I have often seen tears in his eyes at the relation of any misfortune that befell others. He was ever the first proposer in any joint charity from the theatrical stock, and I am convinced has often prevailed upon their unwilling liberality. His care of the orphan daughters of Mr Farquhar, in giving them several benefit-plays, continued to the last of his days, and in losing him they have in reality lost a father, but I hope his constant stream of bounty has placed them above want. In short, his private acts of charity are numberless.

An Irish gentleman, who fell into distress, came to the theatre with a play which was read and returned, “with desire to make some alterations for the next season. This postponing but ill agreed with our author’s circumstances, that loudly called for a speedy supply. Mr Wilks, knowing the ill state of his finances, bought a night of his brother-managers and

gave it to Mr. Smith for a benefit Yet he did not think that sufficient, but used all his interest to make it truly a benefit, and put a hundred guineas clear in the author's pocket, with which he took leave of his benefactor " Going abroad to study medicine under Boerhaave, that physician sent him to Russia to the emperor, at whose court he flourished. In a gay manner his benefactor, describing his success, says

Captain Powlett will bring you a few furs, with a small quantity of ermin, the product of Russia Were I settled in Greenland I should do the same, and land you a whale or a white bear. You will receive them without any other weight but themselves But who gave me these furs ? this affluence ? this royal mistress ? this happy situation ? A man just of your age and stature If you can't find him out, ask my dear and worthy friend Sir Harry Wildair, and tell him at the same time the grain was his, and the reaper with the crop shall ever be at his command, etc

This great and good man continued to charm till the last of his performing on the stage He left this world the 27th of September, 1732, and I must declare I have not yet seen his equal in comedy His disconsolate widow caused the following inscription to be put on his monument in St Paul's, Covent Garden, with the arms of the Wilks family, which are three roses, and a rose for the crest His second wife lies also in the same vault, lately deceased

Over him there is this inscription .

NEAR THIS PLACE

(In hopes of a happy Resurrection)

Lyes the body of ROBERT WILKS, Esq,  
One of the Patentees of his Majesty's Theatre.  
A Man in private Life

This superexcellent comedian, by his own request, was interred at twelve o'clock at night, to avoid ostentation Yet, to pay his memory the greatest honour that was ever

done to a subject, the gentlemen of the choir belonging to the King's Chapel came voluntarily and performed an anthem prepared for the solemn occasion

Victor, sending to Garrick a print of a picture from Dublin, says

The only account I can give you of it is, that in the summer of 1751 I was at Bromsgrove, in Worcestershire, with an uncle (Mr Thomas Wilkes), he gave me two pictures, which were a present to him from our relation, Mr. Robert Wilkes, in return for some cider and peary which he used to send him almost every summer. Mr Wilkes told him they were a present to him from Mr Congreve with some others. one was the picture I sent you, the other, a head of Milton, with his name and age on it (forty), the painter not known, which picture I gave to the late Alderman Faulkner, and is now in nephew Todd's collection. I brought them up to London, and showed them to the late Mr Ellys, the painter, who lived in Somerset House, he knew them, and told me that he heard from Mr Robert Wilkes that Sir Peter Lely made a present of four pictures of his painting to Mrs Bracegirdle, who gave them to Mr Congreve, and he gave yours, Milton's, a head of Dryden, Sir G. Kneller, etc., to Mr Wilkes, the latter Mr Ellys purchased from his widow.

Chetwood adds curious testimony of his double power.

In the fourth act of *Macbeth*, when he is told by Lenox of the loss of his wife and children, his mixture of sorrow and manly grief drew tears from almost every eye, when if he had blubbered like a schoolboy whipped, the touching scene would have raised laughter in the place of grief, and if the best judges laughed at his parts in comedy, I can't conceive they have shed more tears since his much-lamented death at any of the above-mentioned plays

Before, however, these events took place, and before Booth's death occurred, the prudent managers had fortunately be-thought them of applying for a renewal of their patent, now on the eve of expiring. Thus they obtained without difficulty,

It\* was made out to Wilks, Cibber, and Booth, and granted "for gathering together, forming, entertaining, governing, privileging, and keeping a company of comedians for His Majesty's service" The patent was for twenty-one years, from September

Thus they were fortified with something to dispose of. Yet this step was not done without contest, and on April 25th the matter was brought before the court, and the validity of the new patent was argued before the Lord Chancellor, Chief Justice Raymond, and Baron Comyns It was decided to be a lawful grant, and passed the Great Seal It is curious to note how little time was allowed to elapse before turning this to profit.

The accident that deprived the managers of Mrs Porter's services at such a moment was truly an unfortunate one

She lived at Heywood Hill, near Hendon After the play she went home in a one-horse chaise, her constant companions were a book and a brace of horse-pistols In the summer of 1731, as she was taking the air in her one-horse chaise, she was stopped by a highwayman, who demanded her money. She had the courage to present one of her pistols to him The man, who perhaps had only with him the appearance of firearms, assured her that he was no common thief, that robbing on the highway was not to him a matter of choice but necessity, and in order to relieve the wants of his poor distressed family, and told her such a melancholy story that she gave him all the money in her purse, which was about ten guineas The man left her, upon this she gave a lash to the horse, he suddenly started out of the track and the chaise was overthrown, this occasioned the dislocation of her thigh-bone She made strict inquiry after the robber, and finding that he had not deceived her, she raised among her acquaintances about 60*l*, which she took care to send him. Such an action in a person

\* I have not seen the original patent, but these extracts are set out in the "Case of the Patentees," 1733

of high rank would have been celebrated as something great and heroic, the feeling mind will make no distinction between the generosity of an actress and that of a princess

She was brought forward by Betteiton, who had noticed her cleverness. Like Oldfield, she was welcomed in fashionable society, but she was of grave imposing manner. Davies saw her act, and describes her as "the genuine successor of Mrs Barry, whose theatrical page she had been when very young. When the scene was not agitated with passion, to the general spectator she did not give equal pleasure, her recitation of fact or sentiment was so modulated as to resemble musical cadence rather than speaking, and this rendered her acting somewhat cold and ineffectual. Where the passion predominated she exerted her powers. She was tall, and well shaped, but not handsome, and of a fair complexion, elevating herself above all personal defects by her exquisite judgment. But her action was enfeebled by a dislocated hip. She was enthusiastic in praise of young Garrick, though he belonged to the new school, and lamented her want of youth and vigour to exert her skill with so great a genius

"Mrs Porter outlived her annuity, and in a very advanced age was principally supported by a very worthy nobleman, Lord Cornbury, who made her a present of a new comedy, and permitted her to publish it, for her benefit, by subscription. She died about the year 1762. When Dr. Johnson, some years before her death, paid her a visit, she appeared to him so wrinkled that he said a picture of old age in the abstract might be taken from her countenance. Mrs. Porter lived for some time with Mrs Cotterell, eldest of Colonel Cotterell, and Mrs Lewis, who, I believe, now resides in the Circus at Bath."

The diligent Davies adds that "the anecdotes relating to Mrs Porter were communicated to me by an elderly gentle-

woman, lately dead, an acquaintance of Dr Johnson, who often visited her, by one who was a frequenter of the theatres for near sixty years, and others ”

It was about that time of her life when I first saw her; when “The Careless Husband” was acted by those three excellent performers, the theatre might be justly called the school of politeness, where persons of the first rank might have learned such behaviour as would have added to their dignity Mrs Oldfield died in October, 1730. Her loss sat the heaviest on Mr Wilks, who, by their playing so long together in our best comedies, very happily supported that humour and vivacity which is so peculiar to our English stage Wilks chose the late Mrs Horton to supply her loss Millamont, in “The Way of the World,” was the first part, and my intimacy with him at that time gave me an opportunity to be assured she acquitted herself in that character to his satisfaction In that and Estifania she was generally allowed to be the only copy that could remind us of that excellent original

It must be confessed this actress was under the almost insurmountable disadvantage of a plain person and a bad voice She had naturally a tender voice, which was enlarged by labour and practice into sufficient force to fill the theatre, but by that means that tremor was contracted which was a singularity that nothing but custom could reconcile, and yet, being blest with a good understanding and a good ear, she made herself a complete mistress of her art She acquired an elevated dignity in her mien, and threw out a spirited propriety in all characters of rage, but when grief and tenderness possessed her she subsided into the most affecting softness. The truth of this remark was manifested by the Hermione and Belvidera which she performed many years with great applause This actress had also the singular happiness of preserving her reputation in private life I hear she is yet living, and enjoying the sweets of that felicity.

## CHAPTER V.

### COVENT GARDEN THEATRE.

WE are now arrived at one of the important eras in theatrical history, when a new theatre was to be established, destined to share with that of Drury Lane the increasing public interest in the drama. The situation chosen was within view of the other, and the rivalry was likely to prove dangerous. Drury Lane was now an old and old-fashioned house, also a first experiment in theatre building, so there was ample room for a new experiment, guided by taste and enterprise. These Rich, who came of a clever, speculative, and energetic family, was ready to supply. The first step was to find the money; but this was a matter of no difficulty. In January, 1731, we learn that "a subscription to aid Mr. Rich in building a new theatre in Covent Garden, amounting to 6000*l*., was subscribed. It was to be speedily begun by that ingenious architect, James Shepherd, Esq., his draught being very much approved of already." The theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields it was proposed to sell to the Commissioners of Stamps for a new office.

Almost at once the undertaking was commenced, and the progress of the workmen watched with much curiosity. By July it had been pushed forward with great energy, and



numbers of the nobility resorted thither daily to look on at the works. In September an accident occurred as they were raising one of the beams for the roof, one man was killed and others much injured. But, it may be conceived, this promise of success must have alarmed the rival house. As we have seen, on the death of Steele a new licence was readily obtained. His patent, by its terms, was to run for three years after his death, and these were now expiring. Application was now made for a new patent, which was secured. But not unnaturally, Rich, conceiving this was a good opportunity to reopen the question of interference with his old patent, came to the Court of Chancery to oppose them. It was solemnly argued before the Lord Chancellor, the Chief Justice Raymond, and Mr Baron Comyns. It was decided to be a lawful grant, and accordingly passed the Great Seal. This turned out fortunately for one of the partners, who, as we shall see, in July, disposed of his share to Mr Highmore, a fashionable amateur.

But there was more dangerous opposition still for the new enterprise. We shall see presently how successful was to be a "throwster" in his temporary theatre at the East End. This had drawn such crowds, that he was emboldened to establish a more ambitious undertaking. This prosperity was owing to his assistant, for he himself, as Chetwood tells us, not understanding the management, left it to Giffard, who did. He issued proposals for a subscription for thirty-two shares, the holders to receive 1s 6d each acting night, with a free admission, while as a security the ground was to be handed over to them as mortgagees. The sum of 2300*l*. was subscribed, on which, not without serious opposition from the City, ground was secured in Ayliffe Street, from Sir W Leman, on lease for sixty-one years, and at a rent of 45*l*. Here a handsome though small theatre was speedily completed, and

opened on October 2nd, 1732 The decorations, in the florid style, were the theme of great praise.

Meanwhile the new Covent Garden Theatre was being pushed on, and was now nearly completed. In scenery and decorations it was determined to excel all preceding efforts. Haivey and Lambert—who are mentioned as if their names were a sufficient guarantee of excellence—were busily engaged painting scenes, while Signor Amiconi, an artist in the florid Lagueire style, and who gained a reputation by decorating the staircase of Lord Tankerville's house in St James's Square, was painting the proscenium with a gorgeous apotheosis, in which Apollo and other appropriate divinities figured\* The house

\* Rich's "Gloiy," or his Triumphant Entry into Covent Garden This print alludes to the removal of Rich and his scenery, authors, actors, etc , from the playhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields to Covent Garden, and might therefore be as probably referred to the year 1733, when that event happened The scene is Covent Garden, across which, leading towards the door of the theatre, is a long procession, consisting of a cart loaded with thunder and lightning, actors, etc , and at the head of which is Rich, invested with the skin of the famous dog in "Perseus and Andromeda," riding with a lady in a chariot driven by Harlequin, and drawn by satyrs, or yahoos The verses at the bottom of this plate explain the artist's meaning

Not with more glory through the streets of Rome,  
Return'd great conquerors in triumph home,  
Than, proudly drawn with beauty by his side,  
We see gay Rich in gilded chariot ride  
He comes, attended by a num'rous throng,  
Who, with loud shouts, huzza the chief along  
No sensible and pretty play will fall <sup>a</sup>  
Condemn'd by him as not theatrical  
The players follow, as they here are nam'd,  
Dress'd in each character for which they are fam'd  
Qum, th' old bach'lor, a hero Ryan shows,  
Who stares and stalks majestic as he goes

<sup>a</sup> "No sensible and pretty play," etc "This," says Mr Ireland, "refers to Cibber's decision on the merits of some piece offered for representation" In a copy of verses addressed to Rich on the building of Covent Garden Theatre, are the following lines, which seem to allude to the rejection already mentioned.

Poets no longer shall submit their plays  
To learned Cibber's gilded wither'd bays,  
To such a judge the labour'd scene present,  
Whom sensible and pretty won't content

"held" about 200*l*. From the stage to the back of the boxes was about fifty-one feet, while the sitting accommodation only allowed twenty-one inches for each person, though two feet is the least space that offers comfort.

There was another reason which would dispose the patentees to think that their property was to be depreciated. This large and important theatre, which had for some time back been rising, was thus planned by Rich. It had two entrances by long covered passages—one from Bow Street, the other from the Piazza in Covent Garden, where was a handsome arched doorway with Ionic columns. Some time ago was shown an order for the new theatre on the fourth night after the opening "Mr Wood,—Let two ladies into the front boxes 'The Orphans'—Yours, JOHN RICH "

One would have thought that nothing would be less likely to float down the stream of time than a pit or gallery ticket, yet there have been collectors who continue to secure some even of the time of Charles the Second. Some years ago there was shown a counter of admission to the Queen's Theatre, about the size of a penny. On one side was the head of the Queen, prettily engraved, and the words, "Queen's Theatre," on the other, "For the Pit 1684." This was made of copper. For the Duke's Theatre one side was marked, "Upper Gallerie. 1667." On the other, a pretty device of a coronet over a monogram.

As it will be interesting to know something of the Gueves and Telbins of those days, we may turn to the record of a very accurate observer, whose memory stretched over many years, and who seems to have met in his day many important personages.

Monsieur Devoto, a Frenchman, though of Italian parents, several years after was appointed scene-painter by Mr Rich,

for his theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. He was also employed to paint the scenery and decorations at the theatre in Goodman's Fields.

Amiconi, however, had contributed his tasteful talents to the improvement of the scenery of the Opera House in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, and I remember having heard that nothing had been seen equally splendid and imposing, with this department of stage effect, in England, before this epoch—one, indeed, when Handel and Bononcini composed the music for the opera, and Farinelli and the rival goddesses Faustina and Cuzzoni excited that memorable civil war 'twixt "*Tweedle-dum*" and "*Tweedle-dee*." This Amiconi, together with Farinelli and Bononcini, came to England in the same vessel, and arrived in London in the same carriage, when, in spite of all opposition, the influence of these musicians obtained for their friend and compatriot artist the envied appointment of principal scene-painter to this theatre. His singular abilities, it seems, merited this preferment, although those employed before were sufficiently mortified at the success of this foreign rival.

His professional employment, however, was not confined to the Opera House, Rich, on his removal to the new theatre at Covent Garden, when he quitted Lincoln's Inn, engaged him conjointly with the celebrated George Lambert, the founder of the Beefsteak Club, in preparing the scenery for this new stage. It is not generally known that the ceiling of this theatre was magnificently painted and decorated with groups of heathen deities, amusing themselves and banqueting in the clouds. Amiconi, moreover, designed the *plafond* to that magnificent staircase at Buckingham House, which has been removed in the recent alterations of that royal residence.

Mr Grignion once sent to Dibdin, with some theatrical curiosities, a facsimile order for two to the boxes, in Mr. Rich's handwriting, and some notes on the residences of actors at this time.

You will see, sir, that Covent Garden was then the emporium of the arts and sciences, and the residence of the chief nobility

of the kingdom My late dear grandfather's cordial friend, the celebrated Barton Booth, lived in Charles Street, No 4, Colley Cibber lived in No 3, and Easty's Hotel was Mr Garrick's, Mrs Oldfield lived in Southampton Street, Wilks built the house in Bow Street, next door but one to the theatre, Garrick and Macklin lodged in it.

By November, 1732, the papers alluded to "the new theatre in Covent Garden as being completely finished," and spoke of its approaching opening on the 27th At last, on December 7th, it was opened, and it was significantly announced that it was under the dormant patent granted by Charles the Second to Sir W Davenant. Aaron Hill, in a letter to Pope, written in May, 1733, also states that this was the patent under which Mr Rich was acting "I have almost forgot what I told you of the patent, but at the time I told it I could not well be mistaken, having just then had the account from Mr. Davenant, the envoy. Indeed, I fancy it was only of his ancestors' patent that he spoke, unless Sir W. Davenant bought up Killgrew's I know no way of coming to the knowledge of this affair, Mr Davenant being now abroad, and I know not where "

On account of the great demand for places, the pit and boxes were laid together at 5s, and, to prevent the scenes being crowded, admission to the stage was 10s 6d

The bill set out "By the company of comedians will be revived 'The Way of the World,' the clothes, scenes, and decorations entirely new, but on account of the great demand for places, the pit and boxes, by desue, will be laid together at 5s, gallery, 2s.; upper gallery, 1s, and to prevent the scenes being crowded, the stage, 10s. 6d All persons who want places are desired to send to the stage-door (the passage from Bow Street leading to it), where attendance will be given and places kept for the following nights as usual."

The parts were thus cast Mirabel, Ryan, Fainall, Quin, Witwood, Chapman, Petulant, Neale, Sir Wilful, Hipposley, Waitwell, Pinkethman, Lady Wishfort, Mrs Eggleton, Millamont, Mrs Younge; Marwood, Mrs Hallam; Mrs Fainall, Mrs Buchanan, and Foible, Mrs Steevens, who was later to become the manager's wife. Quin was a judicious speaker of Fainall's sentiments, but heavy in action and deportment, Walker, who succeeded him, understood and expressed the assumed spirit and real insolence of this artful character much better, Ryan was greatly inferior to the accomplished Mirabel of Wilks, and Chapman's Witwood, though not so finished as that of Colley Cibber, was of his own drawing, and very comic. It was agreed that everything about the theatre was magnificently appointed.

Such was the report of Tom Davies, who would appear to have "assisted" at the opening of Covent Garden, for he was much impressed by this worthy display, which was likely to bring aid to the cause of legitimate drama.

Thus ended the long series of performances at Lincoln's Inn Fields under the direction of John and Christopher Mozer Rich, whose company had acted all kinds of entertainments with considerable success from September 28th, 1723, to December 5th, 1732. They had held the theatre from 1714 to 1732, a period of over eighteen years.

## CHAPTER VI

### HIGHMORE AS MANAGER

ONE of the features of every dramatic era is the craze for management with which young men of fashion or wealth have been seized. This is kindled by the sense of importance or of authority over a number of persons of all kinds and characters, not to be secured otherwise. It is always fascinating. There has, indeed, been a line of these *impresarios* down to our own time whose fate has in most cases been disastrous, their unskilled and ignorant management being no more than a gulf that swallowed up them and their fortunes. A young man about town had been induced to make a wager of a hundred guineas that he would appear on the stage and perform *Lothario*. This he did, and succeeded in winning his wager, and this success seems to have drawn him still nearer to the stage. His name was Highmore. This gentleman was induced to offer to purchase Mr Booth's influence in the theatre. He agreed to give the large sum of 2500*l* for only one-half his share, but requiring the *whole* of his powers. By this time the widow of Wilks had deputed her control to Mr Ellys, or Ellis. The interference of these two inexperienced persons justly gave offence to the old manager, who withdrew, leaving, however, his eccentric son as his deputy. On July

30th, 1732, it was announced that Mr Booth had sold his share to John Highmore, of Hampton Court.

But few incidents distinguished the remaining period of this expiring management

We have noted that the managers, not long before their retirement, succeeded in getting a renewal of their patent for twenty-one years Cibber does not touch on the immediate causes of the break up, nor mention that Booth had disposed of his share of the patent Victor, who had been now for many years intimate with the managers, tells us the story fully

It was natural (he says) for a man who, like Booth, had contracted a love for money, to turn his thoughts upon a purchase, and the following lucky accident presented itself. Just before the death of Mr Wilks, the late John Highmore, Esq, a gentleman possessed of an estate of 800*l* a year, offered himself (by way of frolic for one night) to play the part of Lothario, prompted to that extravagance by a wager at White's of 100*l*, which he had made with the late Lord Limerick. The managers readily accepted the proposal, and, besides the benefit of the greatest receipt they had ever known to a stock-play (as the stage was crowded), Mr Highmore made them a present of the rich suit he made up for the character There are many persons now living, who saw him on the stage, can bear witness with me, that this unhappy gentleman had not one requisite for an actor, and yet if his vanity would have suffered him to have ended his frolic with his first night's performance, there were numbers of his auditors who would never have been persuaded but his acting of Lothario was superior to Booth's ! . . Mr. Booth, who was a man of quick penetration, soon fixed his eye upon this gentleman for a purchaser of his share of the new patent, and from my intimacy with both those gentlemen I was the person who had the misfortune to be singled out by Mr. Booth to make the proposal to Mr Highmore As I then thought it doing a mutual service to both parties, without the least hesitation (one morning when alone with him at his own house) I told him Mr Booth had requested me to inform him of his desire to part with his share of the new



patent, by which the purchaser would become a manager and third sharer with Mr. Cibber and the widow Wilks, who had just then appointed the late Mr. Ellis, the painter, to be her deputy I well remember Mr Highmore had no sooner heard the proposal than he replied "Ah, ah!" and have they thought of it at last? I really expected to have heard from some of them on this subject" This reply to the proposal will, I hope, convince my reader that no arguments were necessary to persuade him into the purchase. To be brief, an appointment was then made for an interview with Mr Booth on that business, at which I was present, and after two or three meetings the large sum of 2500*l* was agreed to be paid for *one-half* only of Mr Booth's third share of his patent 5000*l* was demanded for the whole share Mr Highmore (desirous to be engaged) thought it safest to purchase only half the share, but bargained for all the power, as he was to act for Mr Booth in the management. As the patentees had, for the preceding twenty years, enjoyed such uninterrupted success, and their shares had amounted to 1500*l*, and never less than 1000*l* a year, and as this was (fortunately for Booth) the first sale that had been offered, it was no doubt owing to that circumstance alone that so extravagant a price was given, because in less than twelve months Mr. Highmore purchased Mr Cibber's whole third share for 3000 guineas, which was but 650*l* more than Booth got for his half! Thus Mr Highmore paid the sum of 5650*l*. for one share and a half, which was just half the power of the patent! He should before that have made this timely and useful resolution, that he advanced that great sum to buy out the remaining two eminent men, whose abilities in their profession were the sole cause of the success that attended their theatre! I remember, when Booth's purchase-money was paid by Mr Highmore, and the transaction publicly known, Mr Cibber seemed greatly hurt at the thoughts of meeting Mr. Highmore and Mr. Ellis in the office of managers, to consult with and settle the business of the theatre, and said, to avoid the importance of one and the ignorance of the other, he would have his deputy too, and accordingly invested his son Theophilus to sit down with those gentlemen in his place, who wanted nothing but power to be as troublesome as any young man living However, by his great activity and superior know-

ledge in the business, he got up a new pantomime entertainment, called "The Harlot's Progress" (a story just then invented and made popular by that great genius, Hogarth), which was much approved, and brought a deal of money to the theatre. By this means Mr Highmore was a gainer at the close of the season, but that profit, and the disgust he conceived to the behaviour of young Cibber, determined him to treat with the father for his share of the patent, which second purchase very soon proved fatal to Mr. Highmore. Soon after followed Booth's death, and his widow very wisely made the best bargain she could for her remaining sixth share with Mr Giffard, who was then master of the new theatre in Goodman's Fields, for which I have been told she got 1500*l*. This second purchase of Mr Highmore's was at the commencement of the season 1733, and in that situation did that gentleman enter into the second season of his theatrical government, with only Mr Ellis, as agent for the widow Wilks, to aid and assist him, for Mr Giffard had at that time a company of his own to manage at a remote end of the town, and made his purchase in Drury Lane patent (I heard him say) as a good stake in an establishment he thought much surer than his own. I believe I may venture to affirm that two weeks had not passed of Mr. Highmore's government in the theatre before a revolt began to show itself among the capital performers, which, I am sorry to say, was spirited up by Mr. Theophilus Cibber, the son of the late patentee, who had a few days before received that large sum of money for his property there, and so dexterous was this young captain, that he instantly got all the seniors and persons of any consequence in the company to enlist under his banner old Mills, Johnson, Miller, Griffin, Harper, etc. Mrs. Heron was at that time at the head of the female list, and in the possession of the late Mrs. Oldfield's parts. She, and all the women, went with the revolvers, but the late Mrs. Horton and Mrs Clive, and the little theatre in the Haymarket was fitted up and decorated with the greatest expedition, where they opened with the comedy of "Love for Love," to an elegant, crowded audience. The violence of this transaction was at this juncture so notorious that it immediately threw the whole town into party! The friends to the revolvers urged that the actors were a free people, and not to be sold with the patent, as

slaves with a plantation in the West Indies! For, it must be here observed, that there were no articles subsisting between the managers and actors as has been the custom ever since Mr Cibber tells us, at page 363 "We neither asked actors, nor were we desired by them, to sign any written agreement whatsoever, the rates of their respective salaries were only entered in our daily pay-roll, which plain record everyone looked upon as good as City security" Thus, when Mr Highmore made the purchase of that large share of the patent, the performers (as appears above) were free to choose their master, or set up for themselves, even without a licence, if not contrary to the laws of the land, and that must hereafter be inquired into I must own I was heartily disgusted with the conduct of the family of the Cibbers on this occasion, and had frequent and violent disputes with father and son whenever we met! It appeared to me something shocking that the son should immediately render void and worthless what the father had just received 3150*l* for, as a valuable consideration I remember in these disputes the general observation was, "What business had a *gentleman* to make the purchase?"

Highmore seems to have been as reckless and extravagant as the manager that came after him, and there is a rare etching of Hogarth's, portraying a sort of practical joke played off at his expense by his friends, and significant of his habits\*

During the first season the amateur manager had some success and a little profit, but this soon fell off Early in 1733 the infatuated Highmore, wishing to get rid of Theo Cibber, contracted with his father to buy his share for 3000 guineas As this involved the younger Cibber's removal—who, it is stated in the mock "Apology," had been "farming" his father's shares—it kindled his resentment But there was yet another change of management, for the widow Wilks disposed of her share to Mr Giffard. These shiftings boded no good. Then was to follow the revolt of the principal

\* The plate was suppressed after ten impressions had been taken It is clear that this suggested a corresponding incident in one of Foote's dramas

performers, set on by the younger Cibber \* This revolt was a singular incident, and we once more find the Crown lending its countenance to their insubordination, for they now obtained permission to open as "The Company of the Revels" How necessary this control was is shown by two incidents that had occurred recently In July, 1731, an obnoxious play, "The Fall of Mortimer," was announced to be performed at the Haymarket The constables arrived with a warrant to seize the players, but they escaped. And, in the following year, when the managers of Drury had begun to ornament their house, the scaffolding raised for redecorating the interior of Drury Lane was suddenly ordered to be taken down, *orders being given by the Court to open forthwith*

We now come to one of those scandalous scenes of disorder and revolt into which the comedians have periodically broken out, and in which the public are invited to take sides The air is filled with cries and darkened with recriminating pamphlets. The Drury Lane players, having lost the three sober and well-trained directors, soon became disorganised

Highmore, who was sunk in embarrassments, gave a lease of his theatre to his own players, which he seems to have declined to carry out They naturally thought of the plan which has been adopted by so many companies whose managers have made default—viz to carry on the concern for their own benefit The patentee would appear to have repented of his

\* In a print, called "The Stage Mutiny," by Laguerre, the importance of this event is shown Theo Cibber, as Ancient Pistol, is seen approaching and vapouring at the head of a party of players, Mr Heion waves a banner inscribed "Liberty and Property," Highmore shows a scroll on which is written, "It cost 8000l," he is attended by a man without his coat, who flourishes a singlestick, and appears eager to fight This may be Ellis, prime minister and factotum to Highmore Behind Highmore is the widow Wilks in her weeds, with her daughter, on her banner is written, "We'll starve 'em out" Behind are a number of persons with asses' ears, and holding spears, etc, labelled, "Possessors of the house," probably the renters Colley Cibber looks on, pointing at Highmore, and having money-bags in his lap

bargain. This, joined to some other grievances, led to revolt and discontent.

In one of the scurrilous attacks on Theo Cibber is given a curious account of the stages of the revolt. Speaking in the character of Cibber, junior, the writer thus describes what took place

“On Mr Booth’s death the patent became invested as the property of Mr Highmore, the widow Booth, and the widow Wilks. The whole company began to murmur at being ruled by so motley a kind of government as they were now falling under, viz a man who knew nothing of the business, and two women unfit for such a province. Mr Ellis was indeed deputed to act for Mrs Wilks, but I believe that did not much better the affairs. Mr. Ellis, however, became not only a deputy to Mrs Wilks, but prime minister and *factotum* to Highmore. This could be no pleasant situation for the other actors, who had been so many years labouring in the theatre, and bore the burthen of the day such as the elder Mills, Mr Johnson, Miller, Griffin, and some others, who, though younger, had some claim, as Mills, jun, and myself. I found this an admirable time to put in execution a design I had planned, which was, at a proper opportunity, to fling off the yoke and set up for masters and managers ourselves. At length it was resolved, in a full council of war, that we would encamp at the Haymarket. We accordingly took the house of one Potter, a carpenter, who was the landlord, bespoke all our dramatic equipages and furniture, and held frequent councils to settle the operations of the ensuing campaign. At the fair of Bartholomew we gained some recruits; but besides those advantages over the enemy I myself went there in person, and publicly exposed myself. This was done to fling defiance in the patentees’ teeth, for on the booth where I exhibited, I hung out ‘The Stage Mutiny,’ with Pistol at the head of his troop, our standard bearing this motto,

‘We Eat.’ In a few days after, the patentees opened with ‘Æsop,’ to which they added an occasional scene, written formerly by Sir John Vanbrugh, on a prior desertion of actors, wherein they thought they did great service to the patentees, and cast a severe reflection on us. They next attacked us by another old, worn-out, rhapsodical affair of one Fieldings, called ‘The Author’s Farce,’ in which I and my father were daily ridiculed. But all this I laughed at in my sleeve, well considering that joking on the Cibbers could not hurt us. On the contrary, we opened with ‘Love for Love,’ and got up all the strongest plays with a diligent expedition. Our company consisted of the old veterans, who were allowed by the town to be greatly superior to our antagonists; for, excepting Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Horton, there was not one in their company but was the contemptible refuse of the theatre. We had also received an additional force by receiving Mr. Milward, who, having left Mr. Rich on some disgust, joined our forces.”

Theo. Cibber, when later delivering some lectures at the little theatre, thus alluded to this crisis :

Looking over this theatre, in order to prepare it for the reception of my honourable auditors, the motto “Conabimur,” now placed over my head, caught my eye and brought to my remembrance the time and the occasion of my first placing it there.

It was in the month of September, in the memorable year 1733, that myself and a large body of comedians found a happy asylum in this little theatre. At this juncture a patent, granted as a reward to actors of merit, by being privately stockjobbed, became the property of some who proved by the event they had more money than knowledge of what they trafficked for. The actors had taken a lease of Drury Lane, but being illegally shut out of that by the patentees, they were reduced to the necessity of acting in this little theatre.

It was here we set up our standard of Liberty It was then we affixed that motto And oh ! the blessed remembrance of those golden times ! It was here that upwards of a hundred successive nights, as many crowded audiences loudly spoke in favour of our attempt

The licence that obtained at the Haymarket may be conceived from the extraordinary scenes that occurred We hear of constables coming with a warrant to arrest the actors for playing "The Fall of Mortimer," a piece directed against Court favourites, but they contrived to escape. In March, 1733, a more singular business occurred On that night one of the comedians hinted at the Minister's intended Excise Act in a pantomime, "Love Runs all Dangers" Sir Richard Walpole happened to be present, and at the end demanded of the prompter if the words were in his book. Being assured they were not, he gave the actor a sound beating What a scene—the Minister going behind the scenes to interrogate the prompter and "thrash" the performer !

In their appeal to the public are some interesting facts relating to the tenure of the theatre The patentees set out that it had been vested in the widow Wilks, Ellys, Hester Booth, and Highmore, the latter now holding half the patent at a price of 6000*l* and upwards. The theatre was held under lease from the Duke of Bedford to the Rev D Kynaston and Mr Francis Stanhope, as trustees for the renters and sharers, at a rent of 50*l*, with a fine of 1000 guineas on a renewal for twenty-one years. There had been no interruptions from the lessees or renters, who had been paid regularly 3*l*. 12*s*. a night, "besides having the liberty of seeing the plays" A demand had been made for an increased rent, but Mr. Highmore, who was then a stranger to the business, consulted Booth and Cibber, who advised paying the old rent.

“They note that there is no other instance save that of Wilks, Booth, and Cibber being at the head of a company, and it is believed that the like will never be done again till there shall be another set of equal merit”

This remark opens up a curious speculation as to the advantage of actors being at the head of a theatre. In this view it is worth while quoting from Dibdin the following shrewd remarks

From that moment the theatre got into extraneous hands, and thence may be dated the first step toward the degradation of actors. The names of Davenant and Killigrew gave cold expectation of any professional encouragement to actors in their own right. It is true that they were under the immediate protection of the Lord Chamberlain, and could not be otherwise than safely guarded by their privilege of appeal to that nobleman, but this subjected them to adverse interests, which were sure to have adverse consequences.

The progress of this, however, we have seen. We have seen even in Davenant's time that the two companies dwindled into the size of one, and then were glad enough to unite to keep acting upon its legs. We have seen the theatre, after it was split and divided into factions, under Rich, torn, and distracted, till at length the actors, with Betterton at their head, removed, with the permission of King William, to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where, inconvenienced as they were, they had success and were respected. We have seen in what manner, from the various ill conduct of Rich, that he was interdicted by the Lord Chamberlain, with both the patents in his pocket which were granted to Davenant and Killigrew. We have seen the various changes which fixed Cibber in the management, at which time acting began to grow into fame and reputation. We have seen, immediately after his secession, how low it sunk under the management of persons who were not actors. We have seen the miseries of the stage in the time of Fleetwood, and we have seen it rescued from those miseries by Garrick.

The inference from these observations naturally is that,



as the theatre has invariably been a source of meritorious emolument to every description of actors, as the profession of an actor has been considered as perfectly reputable, as the fair privileges of that profession have been accorded and enjoyed as a right which could not be trenched upon, when the property has been confided to actors, and, as the theatre has been, without a single deviation, plunged into difficulties, as the talents by means of which alone a theatre can exist—for authors are nothing without actors—have been misunderstood, misapplied, slighted, and set at naught; as salaries have been curtailed, mulcts imposed, taskmasters employed, and other unjust and unfair means resorted to to distress actors, when the property has fallen into the hands of mere adventurers or men of fortune, so it is evidently proved by circumstances that cannot be controverted, and conclusions that cannot be mistaken, that the theatre can never flourish to any degree of perfection unless confided to the management of actors, and regulated by that paramount authority which I have contended throughout this work has ever been, and ever ought to be, vested in the Lord Chamberlain.

The case was, however, so serious that the patentees made an attempt at accommodation, and on October 30th a letter was sent to Mills and the others at the Haymarket, signed by Messrs. Wilks, John Highmore, John Ellys, and John Rich, and ran

We have been daily in hopes that the mediation of friends would have put an end to the differences, and we are unwilling to take such methods as the law prescribes, assuring you we are willing to do whatever is reasonable. But if you persevere we shall proceed, as the law directs, to support the patents.

None of the persons being there, it was left at Mills's house, and in about two hours was returned unopened. A new direction being immediately put on it, it was addressed to T Cibber, who replied that he was well advised that what he was about was legal, and he knew it was reasonable,

"and therefore I do not think of changing my present condition for servitude." The patentees of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, being resolved to see if they had an exclusive right, summoned the Revels company and that of Goodman's Fields before a bench of justices. On November 5th the case was argued, but the justices were not satisfied as to the validity of the summons, and dismissed it

The only performers that were faithful, amid the faithless, to the managers were Mrs Clive, Mrs Horton, and Bridgewater. Of Mrs Clive it was as might be expected, "who was ever the true and steadfast Pivy." For this behaviour she won from Fielding, in a dedication to his "Intriguing Chambermaid," the following high encomium.

In the present dispute between the players and the patentees, 1733, the part you have maintained is so full of honour that had it been in higher life, it would have given you the reputation of the greatest heroine of the age. You looked on the case of Mr Highmore and Mrs Wilks with compassion, nor could any promise or views of interest sway you to desert them, nor have you scrupled any fatigue (particularly the part which, at so short a warning, you undertook in this farce) to support the cause of those whom you imagined injured and distressed, and for this you have been so far from endeavouring to exact an exorbitant reward from persons little able to afford it, that I have known you offer to act for nothing rather than the patentees should be injured by the dismissal of the audience. In short, if honour, good gratitude, and good sense, joined with the most entertaining humour, wherever they are found, are titles to public esteem, I think you may be sure of it

Nor was this all. The "broken wit," as Cibber styles him, added this, almost the handsomest compliment ever offered to an actress, claiming that he brought her forward. He goes on.

But, great a favourite as you are at present with the

audience, you would be much more were they acquainted with your private character, could they see you laying out great part of the profits which arise to you for entertaining them so well in support of an aged father, did they see you, who can charm them on the stage with personating the foolish and vicious characters of your sex, acting in real life the part of the best wife, the best daughter, the best sister, and the best friend.

This was a serious competition. Driven to his wits' end, Highmore resolved on taking an extraordinary and violent step. In this singular measure he was joined by Rich and the other patentees. It was nothing less than challenging the power of the Crown to give a licence against a patent, and the course was taken of charging the revolted players as vagrants before the magistrates for acting without a patent.

But to return (says Victor) to the deserted and truly distressed new manager, Highmore, whom we left in his Theatre Royal almost without a company. As the season for acting of plays was advanced, he was reduced to the necessity of beating his drum for volunteers, several recruits offered from the strolling companies, but I remember none of any promise but Mr Macklin, who soon distinguished himself. In this maimed condition the business of course went lamely on. Time was given him that the Act against vagrants would effectually serve him.

The first proceeding failed. We read in *The Daily Post* of November 6th, 1733 "The companies of the Haymarket and Goodman's Fields playhouses were yesterday, at the prosecution of Mr Rich, Mr. Highmore, and the rest of the patentees, summoned before Sir Thomas Clarges at St George's Vestry, Hanover Square, to show cause why their companies should not be convicted as vagrants within the Statute, when, after hearing the arguments of Mr Marsh, Mr Serjeant Eyre, and Serjeant Darnell, the justices dismissed the companies honourably,

without making any order against either of them” And on November 10th, it was given out “Whereas the companies of Goodman’s Fields and the Haymarket playhouses were on Monday last, November 5th, at the prosecution of Mr Rich, Mr. Highmore, and the other patentees, convened before Sir T Clarges, Bait, and other justices, at St George’s Vestry, Hanover Square, to show cause why they should not be convicted as vagrants, within the Statute of the 42 of Anne, for acting without patents—Mr Serjeant Eyre, Mr Strange, and Mr Edward Booth, counsel to Mr Mills and company at the Haymarket playhouse, and Mr Serjeant Darnell and others, counsel for Mr Giffard—the justices were pleased to dismiss the companies honourably, as not being in any way within the Statute”

This was surely a significant warning But, nothing daunted, they took a more extreme step A good and respectable actor, noted for his enormous bulk, and who was led therefrom to play Falstaff, was actually selected to be made a scapegoat Constables came and seized him “as a vagrant.”

“On the 12th,” ran the account, “Harper, one of the Revels company, was brought up before the same justices on a warrant, but the counsel being absent, engaged in another theatrical cause going on between the patentees and the Revels company, Sir T. Clarges took on himself to commit Harper to Bridewell as a vagrant, and to be put to hard labour, ‘which by his bulk he seems to be as little fit for, as he is for being a vagrant.’ In defence of Harper it was urged that the Act applied only to players *wandering* abroad. He was a freeholder in Surrey, and had a house in Westminster valued at 50l.”

Cibber, who was present, declared that when it was argued, it seemed to him impossible that the actor could be brought within the Vagrant Act, as he was a householder and could

vote. "But," says Victor, "I have been informed that so far from the housekeeper being a protection from the Vagrant Act, a learned counsellor asserted, that it was in the power of the greatest subject in England to be guilty of an action of vagrancy I well remember, when I heard the event of this trial, and on what a scandalous error all their boasted triumph was founded, I could not help suspecting the integrity of the person who conducted this affair, because, if the housekeeper, who paid scot and lot, could not be deemed a vagrant, the natural question then follows, why was Harper singled out?—a man known for many years to be a housekeeper in the parish of St Paul's, Covent Garden—when there were several more eminent comedians in that company, that constantly acted at both our fairs, and were not housekeepers!"

On the 20th, Harper's case was argued before the Lord Chief Justice Yorke, by twelve counsel, six on each side. The judge admitted him to bail on his own recognisances, and ordered a feigned issue to try the validity of the commitment. It was finally given in his favour. The decision was received with shoutings, and the actor was escorted home in triumph by his friends.

"The dice were thrown, and the poor new manager was devoted to ruin. This trial was attended with no small expense, which, added to his constant failing audiences, was sufficient to destroy a much larger estate than his, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he held out through the season. The misfortunes that befell this gentleman gave great concern to his real friends. He was a man of humanity and strict honour; many instances fatally proved that his word, when solemnly given—which was his custom—was sufficient for the performance, though ever so injurious to himself."

But what led to reconciliation was the unexpected victory of the comedians in their suit with Highmore for the due

execution of the lease On November 12th, 1733, a case was tried in the King's Bench Court upon an ejectment. It was brought by the comedians at the Haymarket against the patentee of Drury Lane, and went in their favour, it appearing that they had taken the lease of the two trustees appointed by twenty-seven out of the thirty-six sharers Highmore, of course, held the patent, though they were given the theatre, thus, neither of the parties could move without the consent of the other. But, on November 28th, "The players of the Revels were ordered to return to Drury Lane"

The players now began to be tired of their enterprise, for their salaries as well as expectations were too large for their theatre, and when such men as old Mills, Johnson, Griffin, Miller, Harper (all men in years), found themselves the dupes of so young and wild a leader as Mr Cibber, junior, they grew ashamed of their situation. Thus their young spirited leader soon discovered, and therefore had address enough to preserve his station, and was not only principal, but alone, at the first meeting for a treaty of peace with the new manager. Thus the revolt ended. It, however, led to a reform in the adoption of what were called "articles," which it became the custom to have drawn up legally and signed for two or three years, with penalties and forfeits in case of breaking any of the engagements. Previously the only record was the entry of every actor's salary on the daily pay-roll. This new provision, with the older one of the "cartel," ought to have been sufficient to prevent strikes in future.

Highmore, being thus utterly broken, had no resource but to retire and give place to another "man-about-town," Mr. Fleetwood. So much was the property now depreciated that the late proprietor was compelled to take about half what he had originally given. Fleetwood took up the undertaking with a

light heart    The introduction of a man of fashion and a gambler was to have a certain influence on the march of dramatic events    Mr Victor, who knew this, thus introduces him

Mr Fleetwood I had the honour to be acquainted with when he arrived at the age of twenty-one, and entered into a landed estate of 6000*l* a year    He was agreeable in his person, and the qualities of his mind, and amiableness of his disposition, carried with them irresistible attractions, all the nobility of the kingdom seemed fond of cultivating an acquaintance with a young man of his extensive fortune, light disposition, and sweetness of temper    He was affable and engaging in his address, which was the last and only remaining quality that he kept with him to his death, and, no doubt, that would have vanished with the rest if he had not found it of constant use to him in his business with the world

The sudden ruin of this once amiable young gentleman happened at a period of universal havoc, when a noble personage of the first rank and fortune in England, and his companion, a baronet of 12,000*l* a year, were surrounded and destroyed by a set of honourable sharpers    Mr Fleetwood unfortunately fell into this set, and received great injury in his fortune before he had time to recollect himself

The arch-intriguer who had prompted so much of this disorder had now earned contempt and unpopularity    This Theo Cibber, who figures discreditably in every relation, was one of those who are gratified even at public contempt, provided it brings notoriety.    One of those who lampooned him thus speaks in his character

A summer company was at this juncture performing at Covent Garden Theatre, and our transactions and my character were thought worthy to be represented on the stage    Accordingly a young spark, who was just come from Trinity College, at Cambridge, to set up for an author in town, and who had just before wrote a farce called "The Mock Lawyer," thought this a proper time to exercise his genius. [This was Mr.

Edward Philips, who produced the ballad opera at Covent Garden in 1733 ] To work he went, and Pistol was to be his hero. A farce was wrote and performed, and the bent of it was to ridicule poor me: tone of elocution, my buskin tread, my elevation of countenance, my dignity of gesture, and expressive rotation of eyeballs, in short, all my manner was burlesqued, and a mock pomp of words, which were a parody of tragedy speeches, and Pistol's bombast run through the character. What then did I, but placed myself in one of the side boxes in the full front of the house. Well, the scene opened, and on Pistol's appearing there was a thundering clap, and all the eyes in the house converted on me; every sentence that hit at me, the joke was heightened by looking at me, who laughed as much at them. Towards the last scene the author had introduced a sale of theatrical goods, and one of the properties put up to be disposed of was Apollo's cracked harp and withered crown of bayes, upon which a character on the stage replied "Oh! pray lay that aside for Mr Pistol, he will claim that by hereditary right" This immediately put the whole house in a roar, and "Encore! encore!" was all the cry. Here the whole pit stood up and looked at me. I joined the laughing encore, and in the repetition of the low witticism, clapped heartily.

The justly celebrated Colley Cibber (says Miss Bellamy), being one day in the green-room, and observing his son to enter, dressed in a black satin coat and breeches, with white satin apparaments, and a waistcoat trimmed with silver frogs, he inquired of him what character he performed that night. To which the young man, who had now attained his fiftieth year, replied, "None, sir." Struck with the oddity of his appearance, the father, having taken a pinch of snuff, with a very solemn air, such as would have become Sir Novelty Fashion, then asked him what made him appear in so singular a dress. "Taste, sir, taste," answered the youth, with his usual pertness. Upon which the sue, being now highly exasperated at the absurdity and impudence of the son, exclaimed, "Then, I pity you!" "Don't pity me, sir," replied Theophilus, turning upon his heel at the same time with the utmost effrontery, "pity my tailor." As another trait of this gentleman's character, I must inform you that he had such a passion for



being talked of, that he inquired of his servant what the world said of him, and upon the domestic's telling him that they did not entertain the most favourable opinion of him, the Foppington of the time replied, "Well! let them but speak of me at all, and I shall be satisfied" When this oddity was formed, nature certainly was not in the best of humours, as he was not able to boast of her liberal gifts. To a short squat figure was joined an enormous head, with the most frightful face I ever beheld. The latter endowment was, indeed, frequently of service to him, as, in his acting, he made ugliness to pass for grimace; besides which, he substituted pertness and assurance for wit and humour. I must beg your patience whilst I finish my picture of this strange personage, by adding that he was a compound of meanness and extravagance. He was profuse without being generous, and would borrow money from every one of his contemporaries (notwithstanding he had a very considerable appointment), and that without the smallest intention of ever repaying them. The regard I had for his father introduced him to me; but his demands were so frequent, that at length, tired out, I gave him a sum that he might never borrow of me again.

This was the principle afterwards adopted by the good Dr. Primrose.

## CHAPTER VII

### FLEETWOOD.

THE revolted comedians, before Highmore's departure, appear to have actually engaged to take Drury Lane on their own account. Of this there can be no doubt, as it is set forward in their "case," drawn up when the Licensing Act was proposed:

The case of B Johnson, J Mills, T Cibber, John Harper, B Griffin, W Mills, W Milward, and E Butter, lessees of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. They urge that in 1733 they took a lease of the theatre for fifteen years at a rent of 920*l.*, which, with taxes and repairs, make the whole 1000*l.* a year. They beg to be allowed to perform there.

This led to regular legal proceedings against Fleetwood, for we learn that on March 9th, "This day we had possession of Drury Lane House by law, and Charles Fleetwood, Esq, having bought the patent, all was amicably arranged between him and the old company."

Finally, on the 15th, the Players of the Revels to the King, assisted by sheriff's officers, went in a body to Drury Lane, which was delivered into their possession by Mr Fleetwood "as a matter of form." They must have been, therefore, in joint possession with the manager.

Fleetwood had but few gifts for management, and looked on his theatre, as Sheridan was to do later, as a mode of providing means for his pleasures. He knew not how to provide actors, and was so destitute of good material that he had to depend on some old veterans for the attractions. One of these was the elder Mills, on whose unequal shoulders had descended the mantle of Booth. He seemed, we are told, "to sink under the weight he had engaged to carry. Being now turned of threescore, he might be literally and truly called the theatrical porter, for the burden of the business lay entirely on him. I have seen the list of his characters, and as that company generally played one hundred and eighty nights, Mills performed at least one hundred and seventy nights every season."

This return of the capital actors to their old and well-accustomed theatre made a very visible difference in the audiences, to the advantage of the new manager, whose unskilfulness in the business of the stage was by that means the longer concealed, but though he was an entire stranger to the art of theatrical navigation, he had cunning enough to look out for a pilot. He selected successively the two most unsuited assistants as stage-managers. "Theophilus Cibber set out with him, his favourite and first minister, but did not long continue in that high office. The manager had sense enough to find that he was an improper and dangerous man. Cibber was therefore displaced for Macklin, a man at that time of seeming humble pretensions, but of capabilities to raise himself to the office of Lord High Cardinal. This minister continued long in the highest favour with the manager, and the business of the theatre was conducted some years under his influence and direction. I well remember there were all the appearances of success, as well as all the usual murmurings and discontents among authors and actors, but I must speak of the particulars of this period from report."

Passing by many incidents of little interest, we now approach what was a critical period for the drama, viz the year 1737, when "the famous Licensing Act" was passed, the history of which is well known, when four years before, in 1733, a number of the comedians had deserted the patent theatres and set up at the Haymarket. The Chamberlain, when he had given a licence, was indifferent, and bade their opponents seek their remedy at law. But the real cause was the licence indulged in by that broken wit, Fielding, at the Haymarket.

Much as the Licensing Act and the licensees' doings have been objected to—described as an anachronism—it has been shown to have been an absolute necessity as a restraint *in reserve*. Nor was it ever so necessary as at present, with the amazing quantity of theatres, places of entertainment, and music-halls, the performances being shaded off imperceptibly into more correct and classical plays. With the competition and difficulty of "hitting the public taste," licence of a gross and personal kind would be certain to set in, for which an action at law would be too uncertain and slow a remedy. A modern instance will show how easily this could be developed. One of the wittiest and liveliest dramatic writers of our day, some years ago, brought out a parody, in which three leading statesmen, represented to the life, were shown visiting the Elysian Fields. The effort was most diverting and successful. Nothing in the direction of farce could have excited more genuine fun and merriment. But it is easy to see that that would have been a point of departure. The mine would have been worked, the stage filled with ridiculous pictures of eccentricity, and even inferiority, and as it reached the inferior houses, coarser and grosser portraits would have been exhibited. The censor wisely interposed. The truth is, however, the Licensing Act is really not intended to be worked in the case of orthodox theatres.

In Hamlet's advice to the players, so often quoted, and perhaps the best code of instruction for the player, he says, it will be remembered, that it is all important "you had better have their good report when living than dead" This always seemed extraordinary as viewed by the standard of our time, for the good or bad voucher of the actor was really of no more account than that of any other profession But how intelligible this becomes when we think of Bayes and his mimicry; of Jo Haines, of Fielding and his political pieces, and above all of Foote, who thrived and maintained himself and his theatre on this evil report of others !

That such a name as Fielding, and after him of Foote, should be associated with the Haymarket was sufficient to bring glory to the little theatre. There was a curious likeness in their pieces; both indulging in the same sort of personality, though Fielding specially indulged in ridicule of matter connected with the stage Some of his pieces portray the life behind the scenes, bringing on manager, prompter, actors, rehearsals, in the style so pleasantly ridiculed in "The Critic" This topic of the stage should always be sacred on the stage, and it is as undignified in the performers who ridicule it as disrespectful to the audience In private life people are recommended never to tell jests or stories against themselves, the result of which is only a loss of respect. And when prompter and carpenter and "call-boy" come forward in the habit as they lived, and an interior of the green-room is presented, the vacant laugh is indeed produced, and some curiosity is gratified, but it is at the expense of much contempt.

During the vogue of Fielding, which continued from the year 1727 to 1736, he supplied a number of pieces of this character, viz "Pasquin," "The Historical Register," "Don Quixote in London" (introduced by a satire of this kind), to which might be added "Tom Thumb" and "The Grub

Street Opera," in which authors were ridiculed. In the first class we have the "players," rehearsing, and all the apparatus of the stage introduced. The author is asked for, and it is announced that he was arrested that morning, "and as I heard it was for upwards of 4*l*, I suppose he will hardly get bail." A woman player grumbling at another getting all the principal parts now, she was "determined to advertise against her, and let the town know how she was injured."

Anyone who reads the pieces of Fielding here alluded to in "The Register," etc., will see that the chief offence was struck direct at the King's ministers and their measures. How this was felt may be conceived from the story told by Davies of Sir Robert going behind the scenes to chastise an actor for some allusion of the kind. The more immediate cause, it has often been said, was the impending production of a piece called "The Golden Rump," which Giffard's manager was said to have artfully brought to the minister. But the whole story is told fully in the mock "Apology" and in the life of C Cibber\*.

Mr Giffard had removed about this time from Goodman's Fields to Lincoln's Inn Fields house, which he had hired of Mr. Rich, his removal had not answered his end, and his affairs began to grow desperate. At this same time, in a most vile paper, called "Common Sense," there was a libellous production called "The Golden Rump," which the town and the mob were fools enough to think wit and humour. Now as the hitting in with the humour of the multitudinous mob is very advantageous to a theatre, a dramatic piece was wrote on "The Golden Rump" subject, and called "The Golden Rump," which was given Mr. Giffard to be performed; but before it was rehearsed it so happened, no matter how or why, but so it happened, that Mr Giffard went to Downing Street with this satirical face in his pocket, which was delivered to a great man

\* As this was published in 1741, only three years after the event, and is said to be the work of Fielding himself, or, at least, of someone behind the scenes, it may be accepted as of good authority.

for his perusal; and it was found to be a scurrilous, ignominious, traitorous, scandalous, etc etc. libel aginst majesty itself It was immediately carried to —— shown to —— explained to —— and remonstrated to —— that if there was not an immediate Act of Parliament to stop such abuses, not 1 egal dignity was safe from them *Actum est* 'Twas done The point gained in a moment, and a proper Act ordered to be got “Well, now,” says some impatient reader, “what of all this? What secret is this? By what inference or innuendo does this show the m——’s policy or finesse?” . . . “Prithce, don’t be so mifty, and let me ask you a question by way of a suppose. Suppose, sir, this same ‘Golden Rump’ farce was wrote by a certain great man’s own direction, and as much scurrility and treason larded in it as possible. Suppose Giffard had a private hint how to act in this affair, and was promised great things to play a particular part in this farce Suppose he was promised a separate licence, or an equivalent you may then suppose the minister a thorough politician, who knew how to manage bad things to the best advantage” “Oh! but,” say you, “I will not found my belief on supposes Truth may be supposed Suppose this truth and you may be ight If you are so ungenteele to requene proof demonstrative I have done with you, and can only refer you to the author and negotiators of ‘The Golden Rump’” This, however, is notoriously certain, that the farce of “The Golden Rump” was carried to a great man, and the master of the playhouse, who carried it, was promised something, which he has been some time in a vain expectation of, but will now, in all probability, end in nothing at all.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE LICENSING ACT, 1737.

WE are now arrived at a most important dramatic era, when British public opinion, ever logical, was to find that the misty control of the Chamberlain, founded on traditions as uncertain, could no longer be upheld, and the formal powers of regular law were to be invoked. This was brought about by the encroachment of two small theatres

The history of the house in Goodman's Fields was as follows

Mr Giffard was descended (as Mr. Chetwood tells us) from an ancient family, originally in Buckinghamshire. His father had a numerous issue, he being the last of eight sons. He was born in London, in 1699. In the year 1716 he was made a clerk to the South Sea Company, in which post he remained three years, but, having a strong propensity to the stage, he first appeared in public on the theatre in Bath, in 1719, and, in two years' probation, he made such a progress that the manager of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre invited him to join his company, where he continued two years more. From thence he went to try his fortune in Ireland, where his merit soon brought him into the management. During his stay there he married the daughter of Mr and Mrs Lydal, persons that made very good figures in the theatre. This gentlewoman died in child-bed very young, leaving behind her one son, born



in his father's house on the North Strand, who is now an actor in this kingdom. Some years after Mr Giffard married a second wife, who is now alive. She has an amiable person, and is a well-esteemed actress, both in tragedy and comedy, born, if I am not misinformed by her mother, the widow Lydal, in the year 1711. Mr Giffard and spouse, if I mistake not, came over to England in 1730, where they supported a company of comedians then under the management of Mr Odell, now Deputy Licensor of Plays under the Lord Chamberlain, his Grace the Duke of Grafton. Mr Odell, from not understanding the management of a company (as, indeed, how should anyone that is not in some sort brought up to that knowledge), soon left it to Mr Giffard that did, who, in the year 1733, *caused to be built an entire, new, beautiful, convenient theatre*, by the same architect with that of Covent Garden, where dramatic pieces were performed with the utmost elegance and propriety. Some years after he was obliged to quit that theatre (I may say by oppression) and occupied the vacant theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, but his success did not answer his merit. From thence he transplanted himself in the Theatre Royal, in Drury Lane, where he and his spouse continued ever since.

Merit will sometimes fail of due regard,  
And virtue's self must be its own reward.

The mention of this little theatre reminds us that, slowly and imperceptibly, there were entering into competition with the two old houses some new and less pretentious theatres, which, in defiance of all opposition, and that of a violent kind, were destined at last to break down the monopoly. On December 12th, the "New Haymarket" had opened with a company "that had never appeared before."

In July, 1720, one Potter erected a theatre in the Haymarket on the site of the King's Head Inn, leasing it of John and Thomas Moon, who held under the Crown, at a fine of 200*l*. The expenses were about 1000*l*, and 500*l* more for dresses and scenery. The earliest notice of this theatre is

on December 15th, 1720. "At the new theatre in the Hay-market, between Little Suffolk Street and James Street, which is now completely finished, will be acted French comedies as soon as the rest of the actors come from Paris." The company styled itself "His Grace the Duke of Montague's Company of French Comedians"

And five years afterwards, on October 31st, a new theatre in Goodman's Fields, near the Minories, was opened. This was an old workshop, roughly converted by one Odell into a playhouse. "Its contiguity to the city soon made it a place of great resort, and what was apprehended from the advertisement of plays to be exhibited in that quarter of the town soon followed. the adjacent houses became taverns, in name, but in truth they were houses of lewd resort, and the former occupiers of them—useful manufacturers and industrious artificers—were driven to seek elsewhere for a residence. In the course of the entertainments of this place the manager ventured to exhibit some few new plays, amongst the rest a tragedy entitled 'King Charles the First,' containing sentiments suited to the characters of republicans, sectaries, and enthusiasts, and a scenical representation of the events of that prince's disastrous reign, better forgotten than remembered. Others looked on this newly-erected theatre with an eye more penetrating. The principal of these was Sir John Barnard, a wise and venerable man, and a good citizen. He, as a magistrate, had for some time been watching for such information as would bring the actors at Goodman's Fields playhouse within the reach of the vagrant laws, but none was laid before him that he could, with prudence, act upon. At length, however, an opportunity offered, which he not only embraced, but made an admirable use of. Mr. Henry Fielding, then a young barrister without practice, a dramatic poet, and a patriot,

under the extreme pressure of necessity, had, in the year 1736, written a comedy or a farce—we may call it either or both—entitled ‘Pasquin,’ a dramatic satire on the times, and brought it on the stage of the little playhouse in the Haymarket, which was calculated to encourage popular clamour, and contained in it many reflections on the public councils ”

Sir J Hawkins, a magistrate of much experience, gives a very curious account of the disorders which took place at the new and smaller theatre at Goodman’s Fields, and seems to think that this weighed a good deal with the Government for its suppression. At last, in March, 1735, two years before the Licensing Act, Sir J Barnard moved for leave to bring in a bill to restrain the number and scandalous abuses of the playhouses. “He particularly represented the mischief done by them in the city of London, in corrupting youth and encouraging vice, and prejudicing trade, and this, he said, would be greatly increased if another were built, as projected, in St Martin’s-le-Grand. At this motion, many in the House were seen to smile, but he was seconded by Mr. Sandys, Mr. Pulteney, and by Sir R Walpole. At length, though at first it seemed to be received with a sort of disdain, the case was altered, and it was spoken for both by young and old. Mr James Erskine reckoned up the number of playhouses the Opera House, the French playhouse in the Haymarket, Covent Garden, Drury Lane, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and Goodman’s Fields. There were twice as many as at Paris. He spoke contemptuously of the French, as degenerate. He said it was astonishing what salaries the Italian signoras received, equal to Lords of Treasury and judges. Petitions poured in. In April, a clause was proposed by Government to increase the power of the Lord Chamberlain, which Sir J. Barnard objected to, it being already excessive.

It was stated that the King would not pass it without this, so the bill was dropped, being put off a fortnight in April, and, on Parliament being prorogued, was not brought on."

We now find abundant petitions presented to the House. Petitions from the justices of peace, deputy lieutenants, and many of the principal inhabitants and others of the Tower division, urging that the playhouse in Goodman's Fields was "a great nuisance," and that all attempts to put down the same had hitherto been ineffectual. Those interested in the theatre now found it time to interfere, and "a petition from the subscribers to Goodman's Fields Theatre was sent up. They urged that it had cost 2300*l*, being built in the year 1731. The terms were that each subscriber was to have 1*s* 6*d* a share for every acting night." It was supported by another petition signed by merchants, shopkeepers, weavers, and dyers, for Goodman's Fields was close to Spitalfields, and who were loud in praise of its management, and protesting that it did not interfere with business. Odell took the opinion of eminent lawyers, who advised that he was entitled at common law to carry on his business, on which he did so for a year and a half. Then being minded to quit the business, he disposed of it to Mr Giffard. Giffard acted for a whole season; he issued proposals for and erected his new playhouse. He urged the serious loss and ruin the bill would entail on him. Next came the case of the comedians, etc., belonging to the theatre in Goodman's Fields. They urged that it would deprive about three hundred persons of the common necessities of life, "whose sole dependence is upon the existence of the said theatre, not being bred to any other business. There would be no chance of their being employed at the other houses, as these are overburdened with people and more likely to discharge some of their general actors than receive any additional." There was also a petition to the House of Commons, appealing

to their justice and humanity, they humbly conceiving "that to render any man incapable of getting his bread in the business or occupation which he had been trained up to from his youth is depriving him of life in the most terrible manner."

The answer from the House was an order that the said petition be rejected

It is quite clear, therefore, from these proceedings that the temper of the House and Government was in favour of the licensing power some years before the Act. A curious petition was that of Mrs. Lee, of Southwark Fair, in which she sets out some interesting dramatic facts. She pleaded that she had laboured there for thirty years, where she had erected annually two booths, and in scenes, decorations, and their erection had expended 2000*l*. "She is old, and if the bill pass she will be ruined. That her and her mother's companies have always been the nurseries of the greatest performers, particularly Mrs Boutell and Mr Booth, as well as a great number of the players of Drury Lane and Covent Garden"

Mr Charles Lee, Comptroller of His Majesty's Revels, also appealed to the House, urging that it would interfere with his privileges; while Potter, the builder of the new Haymarket Theatre, described how he had in 1720 agreed for a lease for sixty-one years, at a sum of 200*l*, for the King's Head Inn, on which he was also to expend 1000*l*. He had done so, built a theatre, and had expended 500*l* on scenery. The eccentric Antony Aston urged that he also would be ruined, and prayed that as he was poor he might be heard personally. This was not without effect, and an extraordinary incident in these proceedings was to be the allowing of a professional mummer, such as Tony Aston was, to give his evidence to the House of Commons. Mr Dibdin, who had access to the best information, and had met plenty of persons who must have remembered the narrative, declares that it was owing to his evidence that the House

rejected the bill in its first shape, he having, from his own experience, shown how easy it was to evade the provisions.\*

It cannot be too much insisted on—and, indeed, the evidence seems clear—that the Licensing Act was absolutely necessary † Even under its wholesome restraint reform was some time in being brought about. Only seven years after it was passed we find those stern watch-dogs of morality, the Middlesex Grand Jury, making a presentment of a wholesale kind “The Lady Northington and her gaming-house, Covent Garden—The Solby Castle” Also against “the proprietor of the avenues leading to and from the several avenues for Covent Garden and Drury Lane, for not preventing wicked, loose, and disorderly persons from loitering in the front of his houses,” by which, they urged, many were in danger of losing their lives or of receiving some other bodily injury, and are constantly robbed of their watches They also presented Goodman’s Fields, “where are daily meetings of disorderly idle people,” also Sadler’s Wells

As Cibber says, “a lively spirit and uncommon eloquence was urged against the bill” But he effectually refuted Lord Chesterfield’s reasoning, that what was suppressed on the stage would be printed and published, by quoting from Collier some admissible reflections, admirably expressed.

This satyr of a comedian and another poet have a different effect upon reputation a character of disadvantage upon the stage makes a stronger impression than elsewhere. Reading is but hearing at second-hand The eye is much more affecting, and strikes deeper into the memory, than the ear, besides, upon the stage both the senses are in conjunction. The life of

\* He afterwards published a grotesque account of his speech, which was largely sold Dibdin says that the object of the House in hearing him was to gather the experience of one who had strolled all over the kingdom

† Mr F Place, in his interesting MS notes preserved in the British Museum, reports a conversation held in the year 1833 with the then licenser, Mr George Colman, in which the latter maintained this view.

the actor fortifies the object, and awakens the mind to take hold of it. Thus a dramatic abuse is riveted in the audience, a jest is improved into argument, and rallying grows up into reason. Thus a character of scandal becomes almost indelible; a man goes for a blockhead, upon content, and he that is made a fool in a play is often made one for his life. 'Tis true, he passes for such only among the prejudiced and unthinking, but these are no inconsiderable divisions of mankind.

The patentees, with a stupid disregard of their own interests, favoured the bill, though it gave the Chamberlain full authority to license any number of rival houses that he pleased. They did not perceive "they were at the same time becoming absolute dependents on a M——r, for the bill contained a clause that the Lord Chamberlain should have a power of licensing other theatres, if he so thought proper, within the city and liberties of Westminster. The actors were indeed alarmed, and imagined this Act would lay them under oppressions, from which they could gain no proper redress, for the constant immemorial way of redressing grievances in the government of a theatre is to raise a revolt."

One of the officials under the new Act was Odell, who was made Deputy Licensor and Inspector of Plays, an appointment it was not difficult to account for. Oldys says "He was a great observator of everything curious in conversation of his acquaintance, and his own conversation was a lively chronicle of the remarkable intrigues, sayings, adventures, stories, writings of many of the quality, poets, and other authors, players, and booksellers. He had been a popular man at elections, and the mark of Goodman's Fields playhouse, but latterly had been forced to live reserved and retired by reason of his debts." At the time of his death he was engaged in writing his recollections. Oldys paid a visit to his widow for the purpose of examining his papers, "mostly poems in favour of the Ministry, one of them printed by Sir R. Walpole, who

gave him ten guineas for the writing. The tract liked best was the history of his playhouse in Goodman's Fields. I saw nothing of the history of his conversation with ingenious men, jests, tales, and intrigues, of which no man was better furnished." But Mrs Odell promised to inquire of Mr. Griffin, of the Chamberlain's Office.

Mr Victor describes the result of these high-handed measures

In pursuance of this Act of Parliament\* the new theatre in Goodman's Fields was shut up, as well as the little theatre in the Haymarket, and two new manuscript tragedies, the ensuing season, were prohibited by the licenser, the one, "Gustavus Vasa," written by Henry Brooke, Esq, a young gentleman of a very promising genius, from Ireland, and late a student at the Temple, and the other, "Eleanora," by my late worthy celebrated friend, Mr Thompson. Both these proscribed plays were distinguished by large subscriptions, particularly the first. As I was intimately acquainted with the author, I am certain he cleared above 1000*l* by that subscription, so much incensed were the public at this first instance of the power of a licenser!

While native performances were thus severely dealt with, loud complaint was made of the partiality shown to foreign strollers. It was true that they did not reflect on the Government, but their presence was as demoralising as that of the persons so effectively denounced by Sir J. Hawkins and other magistrates.

The leaders (says Victor, who was present,) that had the

\* By this Act (10 George II), which was in force for nearly a hundred years, a performance of any entertainment of the stage, without authority, by virtue of letters patent, or without licence from the Lord Chamberlain, should be subject to penalties, and if without a legal settlement, the actors should be deemed rogues, etc, according to the Act of Anne. The Chamberlain's authority in licensing plays and prohibiting objectionable ones was also affirmed. It also confined representation under patent or licence to the city of Westminster and the places where the sovereign resided.



conduct of the opposition were known to be there, one of whom called aloud for the song in praise of English roast beef, which was accordingly sung in the gallery by a person prepared for that purpose, and the whole house besides joining in the chorus, saluted the close with three huzzas! This, Justice Deveil was pleased to say, was a riot, upon which disputes commenced directly, which were carried on with some degree of decency on both sides. The justice at first informed us "that he was come there as a magistrate to maintain the King's authority, that Colonel Pulteney, with a full company of the Guards, were without to support him in the execution of his office, that it was the King's command the play should be acted, and that the obstructing it was opposing the King's authority, and if that was done he must read the proclamation, after which all offenders would be secured directly by the guards in waiting."

By this time the hour of six drew near, and the French and Spanish ambassadors, with their ladies, the late Lord and Lady Gage, and Sir Thomas Robinson, a commissioner of the Excise, all appeared in the stage-box together. At that instant the curtain drew up, and discovered the actors standing between two files of grenadiers, with their bayonets fixed, and resting on their firelocks. There was a sight—enough to animate the coldest Briton! At this the whole pit rose, and unanimously turned to the justices, who sat in the middle of it, to demand the reason of such arbitrary proceedings. The justices either knew nothing of the soldiers being placed there, or thought it safest to declare so. At this declaration, they demanded of Justice Deveil (who had owned himself the commanding officer in the affair) to order them off the stage. He did so immediately, and they disappeared. Then began the serenade—not only catcalls, but all the various portable instruments that could make a disagreeable noise were brought up on this occasion, speaking was ridiculous, the actors retired, and they opened with a grand dance of twelve men and twelve women, but even that was prepared for, and they were directly saluted with a bushel or two of peas, which made their capering very unsafe. After this they attempted to open the comedy, but had the actor possessed the voice of thunder it would have been lost in the confused sounds from a

thousand various instruments Here, at the waving of Deveil's hand, all was silent, and, standing up on his seat, he made a proposal to the house to this effect. "That if they persisted in the opposition, he must read the proclamation, that if they would permit the play to go on, and to be acted through that night, he would promise (on his honour) to lay their dislikes and resentment to the actors before the King, and he doubted not but a speedy end would be put to their acting" The answer to this proposal was very short and very expressive "No treaties! No treaties!" At this the justice called for candles to read the proclamation, and ordered the guards to be in readiness, but a gentleman, seizing Mr. Deveil's hand, stretched out for the candle, begged of him to consider what he was going to do, for his own sake, for ours, for the King's That he saw the unanimous resolution of the house; and that the appearance of soldiers in the pit would throw us all into a tumult, which must end with the lives of many This earnest remonstrance made the justice turn pale and passive. At this pause the actors made a second attempt to go on, and the uproar revived, which continuing some time, the ambassadors and their ladies left their box, which occasioned a universal huzza from the whole house, and after calling out some time for the falling of the curtain, down it fell

## CHAPTER IX.

### MACKLIN AND QUIN.

At the period at which we have now arrived, we see actors engrossing even a more prominent share of attention than hitherto, with their factions and rivalries and intrigues. This interest became more developed owing to what might be called the coffee-house life then in fashion, when men of wit and parts frequented such places, and the many clubs that existed were of the pattern that still obtains in old-fashioned villages—an ordinary at the inn, the members seated round a table enjoying drinks and pipes. Round Covent Garden there was a large number of taverns, which were crowded both before and after the theatre, and here the slightest opportunities led to familiar acquaintance. Well-known and even famous personages were to be seen in their favourite seats. This mode of life and its perfect freedom of speech and criticism engendered remarkable shapes of character, and furnished a way to reputation to many who would otherwise have remained unknown. Old Macklin used long after to garrulously retail anecdotes of the state of manners and the tastes of the town in these days, which are highly curious and interesting. He would tell how he belonged to a club

which held a weekly dinner at St Albans, much about this time, called "The Walking Society" It mostly consisted of the performers of both houses, who piqued themselves on their walking, and who obliged themselves never, on any account whatsoever, to ride, or go in a vehicle, but to walk the twenty miles backward and forward the same day The manners of the town and country, he said, were very distinct at that period A countryman in town was instantly known by his dress as well as manners Few persons living sixty or one hundred miles from town ever saw London

"The City and west end of the town kept equal distances No merchant scarcely lived out of the former; his residence was always attached to his counting-house He remembered the first emigration of the merchants from the City, about fifty years ago, was to Hatton Garden, but none but men who had secured a large fortune, and whose credits were beyond the smallest censure, durst take this flight Quin, Booth, and Wilks lived almost constantly in or about Bow Street, Covent Garden, Colley Cibber in Charles Street, Mrs Pritchard in Craven Buildings, Diury Lane, Billy Havard in Henrietta Street The inferior player lived or lodged in Little Russell Street, Vinegar Yard, and the little courts about the Garden, and I myself, sir (added the veteran), always about James Street, or under the Piazzas, so that (continued he) we could be all mustered by beat of drum, could attend rehearsals without any inconvenience, and save coach hire."

Here, at the Bedford, were seen such odd wild beings as Dr Barrowby—half wit, half buffoon—with other eccentrics. To be a theatrical critic was in those days the top feather in the cap of gallantry and literature It was sought after by most of the young men of fashion and polite literature These critics were distinguished from the critics of the present day by not being so by profession, or rather by pecuniary engage-

ment They practised the art as amateurs, and, as they appeared more in their own characters than as anonymous writers, they required greater responsibility in point of learning, taste, and judgment. The coffee-house thus led to a curious system of coffee-house critics—an important section with actual power, that at the Bedford was “crowded every night (about 1754) with men of parts” Almost everyone you meet is a polite scholar and a wit. Jokes and *bon mots* are echoed from box to box, and the merits of every production of the press or performance of the theatres weighed and determined.” It might be matter of speculation what influence these irrepressible judges could have, or by what “sanction” they could enforce their decisions This can be readily answered They had the scurrilous pamphlet or more open attack at command

Thus in January, 1742, appeared a letter from one of these, stating “he was secretary to a society of gentlemen who wished him to acquaint the town with the fact that they will not suffer our entertainments to be interrupted by a set of people who make it their practice every night to flutter and to grin and bow behind the scenes, with huge muffs and French airs, and tawdry outlandish dress We intend to be at Covent Garden house on Tuesday, and endeavour to remove this nuisance, equally grievous to the audience, the actors, and Mr Rich, for the beaux seldom pay.”

In the year 1738, the managers found it necessary once more to protest against the intrusion behind the scenes, saying that the audiences having been lately much disgusted at the performers being interrupted by persons crowding on the stage, it is humbly hoped none will take it ill that they cannot be admitted behind the scenes in future.

About this time two remarkable actors found themselves at Drury Lane, under the new manager, and gave laws to

the coffee-house and tavern These were Macklin and Quin, men of a singular vigour and colour of mind, who would have made their mark in any other profession. The age of the first was long a subject of perplexity and even jest, it being believed that he was born about the time of the Battle of the Boyne, dying, it is certain, in 1797 McLaughlin was his real name, a common one in Ireland He seems to have had extraordinary energy, with a kind of rude truculency.

Wrote Churchill of him :

Macklin, who largely deals in half-formed sounds,  
Who wantonly transgresses nature's bounds,  
Whose acting's hard, affected, and constrained,  
Whose features, as each other they disdained,  
At variance set, inflexible and coarse,  
Ne'er knew the workings of united force,  
Ne'er kindly soften to each other's aid,  
Nor show the mingled powers of light and shade

Yet he was a masterly actor, a masterly writer, and possessed a rough and ready wit,\* while of his acting Reynolds says "I did not meet with this great original till he was in the winter of his life, but I have heard some contemporaries assert that to the *manner* he conjoined a considerable portion of the *matter* of Dr Johnson Of his Shylock, I can venture boldly to assert that, for *identity* of character from the first scene to the last, probably as a performance it was never surpassed."

His violence was unfortunately to be exhibited in a quarrel or scuffle behind the scenes, which ended fatally for an unlucky actor named Hallam This took place one night in May, 1735,

\* Nothing can be better or more spontaneous than the following "Once at a dinner party, he suddenly turned and violently clapped an Irish clergyman on the back 'Now, sir,' he cried, 'what is your opinion of Terence's plays?' The clergyman, confounded by the blow, answered in a rich brogue 'What! do you mean his Latin edition?' 'Do you think,' replied Macklin, giving him another hearty blow, 'do you think I meant his *Irish* edition?' and he d—— to you!"

when the actors were in the scene-room, seated on the "settle," and the play was going on. It will be noted what an amount of coarse oaths were expended, but the scene is brought vividly before us. One Thomas Arne said

I am the numberer of the boxes of Drury Lane play-house, under Mr Fleetwood. On Saturday night I delivered my accounts in at the property-office, and then, at eight at night, I came into the scene-room, where the players warm themselves, and sat in a chair at the side of the fire. Fronting the fire there is a long seat, where five or six may sit. The play was almost done, and they were making preparations for the entertainment, when Macklin came into the scene-room and sat down next me, and high words arose between him and the deceased about a stock wig, for a disguise in the entertainment. He had played in the wig the night before, and now the deceased had got it. "D—— you for a rogue," says the prisoner, "what business have you with my wig?" "I am no more a rogue than yourself," says the deceased, "it's a stock wig, and I have as much right to it as you have." Some of the players coming in, they desired the deceased to fetch the wig and give it to the prisoner, which he did, and then said to him, "Here is your wig, I have got one that I like better." Macklin, sitting by me, took the wig, and began to comb it out, and all seemed to be quiet for about half a quarter of an hour, but he began to grumble again, and said to the deceased "D——n you for a blackguard, scub, rascal, how durst you have the impudence to take this wig?" The deceased answered "I am no more a rascal than yourself." Upon which the other started up out of his chair, and, with a stick in his hand, made a lunge at the deceased, and thrust the stick into his left eye, and, pulling it back again, looked pale, turned on his heel, and, in a passion, threw the stick into the fire. "D——n it," says he, and, turning about again on his heel, he sat down. The deceased clapped his hand to his eye, and said it was gone through his head. He was going to sink, but they set him in a chair. The other came to him, and, leaning upon his left arm, put his hand to his eye. "Lord," cried the deceased, "it is out!" "No,"

says Macklin, "I feel the ball roll under my hand" Young Mr Cibber came in, and immediately sent for Mr Coldham, the surgeon

Whitaker, a dresser in the house, under the comedy players, also heard this noisy dispute Mr Mills, who was acting Juba, came in, and said, "What's the matter with you? We can't play for the noise you make" Macklin answered, "The rascal has got a wig that belongs to me" Mr Mills said to the deceased, "Hallam, don't be impudent, but give him the wig" Hallam still refused, upon which the prisoner said, "D——n you, such a little rascal ought to be made an example of," and so turned out of the room

Macklin, called on for his defence, said

My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, I played Sancho the night before, and the wig I then used was proper for the new farce and absolutely necessary for my part, as the whole force of the poet's wit depends on the lean meagre looks of one that is in want of food This wig being, therefore, so fit for my purpose, and hearing that the deceased had got it, I said to him, "You have got the wig that I played in last night, and it fits my part this night." "I have as much right to it as you," says he I told him that I desired it as a favour He said I should not have it "You are a scoundrel," says I, "to deny me when I only ask you that as a favour which is my right" "I am no more a scoundrel than yourself," says he And so he went out of the room, and I went to the prompter's door to look for Mr Cibber Meanwhile, the deceased went into the scene-room and said I had used him like a pickpocket The author persuaded him to let me have the wig, and the property-man brought him another wig. Upon this he threw the first wig at me. I asked, "Why he could not have done that before?" He answered, "Because you used me like a pickpocket" This provoked me, and rising up I said, "D——n you for a puppy, get out" His left side was then towards me, but he turned about unluckily, and my stick went into his eye "Good God," said I, "what have I done!" And I threw the stick into the chimney. I begged of the persons who were present to take the deceased



to the bagnio, but Mrs Moor said that she had a room where he should be taken care of. I had then no idea that it would prove his end, but feared that his eye was in danger. But the next morning I saw Mr Turbutt, who advised me to keep out of the way or I should be sent to gaol. I begged of him to get the advice of a physician, and gave him a guinea, which was all the money I had about me. From the beginning of the quarrel to the end it was but ten minutes, and there was no intermission.

He was found guilty of manslaughter only.

This unfortunate accident did not injure his professional prospects. At first he ingratiated himself with the improvident Fleetwood, and became his chief adviser and manager, in place of the younger Cibber. His principal, however, was fond of borrowing sums of money from him, 20*l* and 30*l* at a time, chiefly on benefit-nights; and at last persuaded him to become security for him for a large sum of money. From this entanglement he determined to release himself by a bold and truly original device. He pursued him one night to Bartholomew Fair, where he found him taking the Prince of Wales round the various booths. He insisted on speaking with him, inventing a story that he had been arrested as Fleetwood's bond, and had broken out of Bristol gaol, and by raising his voice succeeded in extorting what he wanted. An appointment was made for that night "at The Bunch of Grapes, Clare Market." There came also Howard, an actor, Mr Forrest, a solicitor, and Paul Whitehead, the poet, who at last generously offered to take Macklin's place in the bond. The sum was for 3000*l*. When Fleetwood fled to France, Whitehead was arrested and thrown into prison, dying in much distress.

Quin was what would now be called "general manager." He and Macklin, both being of warm tempers, cordially detested each other. Quin always found fault with the other's

loose and careless style of playing, declaring that it was impossible to have a scene played in a classical or chaste style while Macklin was "on" Macklin, also, complained of the coarse and abusive tone he adopted to the actors Of Macklin the manager would say "If God writes a legible hand, that fellow is a villain!" And he once addressed Macklin, without any provocation "Mr Macklin, by the *lines*—I beg your pardon, sir—the *courage* of your face, you should be hanged."

With these feelings it was not wonderful that yet another scene of violence was added to the green-room records. Macklin, grown very old, thus related his adventure in 1787, at the Rainbow Coffee-house, in King Street, Covent Garden, to an acquaintance, who asked him if Quin and he had ever quarrelled Many persons in the adjoining boxes attended to the veteran, who spoke, as usual, in a very audible voice, but exhibited strong proofs of the rapid decay of his memory

"Yes, sir, I was very low in the theatre, as an actor, when the surly fellow was the despot of the place. But, sir, I had—had a lift, sir Yes, I was to play—the—the—the boy with the red breeches—you know who I mean, sir—he whose mother is always going to law—you know who I mean" "Jerry Blackacie, I suppose, sir?" "Aye, sir, Jerry Well, sir, I began to be a little known to the public, and, egad, I began to make them laugh. I was called the wild Irishman, sir, and was thought to have some fun in me, and I made them laugh heartily in the boy, sir—in Jerry. When I came off the stage, the surly fellow, who played the scolding captain in the play; Captain—Captain—you know who I mean——" "Manly, I believe, sir" "Aye, sir, the same—Manly Well, sir, the surly fellow began to scold me, told me I was at my damned tricks, and that there was no having a chaste scene for me Everybody, nay, egad, the manager himself, was afraid of him I was afraid of the fellow, too, but not much. Well, sir, I told him that I did not mean to disturb him by my acting, but to show off a little

myself. Well, sir, in the other scenes I did the same, and made the audience laugh incontinently—and he scolded me again, sir. I made the same apology, but the surly fellow would not be appeased. Again, sir, however, I did the same, and when I returned to the green-room he abused me like a pickpocket, and said I must leave off my damned tricks. I told him I could not play otherwise. He said I could, and should. Upon which, sir, egad, I said to him flatly, ‘You lie!’ He was chewing an apple at this moment, and, spitting the contents of his mouth into his hand, he threw them in my face.” “Indeed!” “It is a fact, sir. Well, sir, I went up to him directly (for I was a great boxing cull in those days), and pushed him down into a chair and pummelled his face damnably. He strove to resist, but he was no match for me, and I made his face swell so with the blows that he could hardly speak. When he attempted to go on with his part, sir, he mumbled so that the audience began to hiss. Upon which he went forward and told them, sir, that something unpleasant had happened, and that he was really very ill. But, sir, the moment I went to strike him, there were many noblemen in the green-room, full dressed, with their swords and large wigs (for the green-room was a sort of state-room, then, sir). Well, they were all alarmed, and jumped upon the benches, waiting in silent amazement till the affair was over. At the end of the play, sir, he told me I must give him satisfaction, and that, when he changed his dress, he would wait for me at the Obelisk, in Covent Garden. I told him I would be with him, but, sir, when he was gone, I recollected that I was to play in the pantomime (for I was a great pantomime boy in those days), so, sir, I said to myself, ‘Damn the fellow, let him wait, I won’t go to him till my business is all over, let him fume and fret, and be damned.’ Well, sir, Mr Fleetwood, the manager, who was one of the best men in the world—all kindness, all mildness, and graciousness, and affability—had heard of the affair, and as Quin was his great actor, and in favour with the town, he told me I had had revenge enough, that I should not meet the surly fellow that night, but that he would make the matter up somehow or other. Well, sir, Mr Fleetwood ordered me a good supper and some wine, and made me sleep at his house

all night, to prevent any meeting Well, sir, in the morning he told me that I must, for his sake, make a little apology to Quin for what I had done And so, sir, having given him a bellyful, I, to oblige Mr Fleetwood (for I loved the man), did, sir, make some apology to him, and the matter dropped ”

The eye always rests with pleasure on Quin, who, besides adding to the glories of the English stage, furnishes much entertainment by his wit and social gifts He was one of the many Irish contributors to the English stage, though not born in that country.

This great and just actor (says his friend Chetwood) was born in King Street, Covent Garden, the 24th of February, 1693, though numbers believe he owes his birth to Ireland. His ancestors were of an ancient family in this kingdom ; his grandfather, Alderman Mark Quin, was Lord Mayor of the city of Dublin in the year 1676, in the reign of King Charles the Second The father of our Roscius received a liberal education in Trinity College, Dublin, from thence he went over to Lincoln's Inn to finish his studies, where he was called to the Bar , but at the death of his father (who left him a plentiful estate) he returned with his son, then an infant, to take possession

Mr James Quin was educated under the care of Dr Jones of Dublin (a person eminent for learning) till the death of his father in the year 1710 Mr Quin was undoubted heir to his estate, but through his youth and inexperience of the courts, a suit of law hung so long in Chancery, till he, unenabled to carry the cause farther, was obliged to drop it for want of proper assistance I am informed a powerful guider of the law was his antagonist, and a person has but a bad chance to fight a duel with a fencing-master

Our eminent actor first appeared on the stage in old Smock Alley in the part of Abel in “The Committee ” I must take some little pride when I declare I imagine myself the first that persuaded him not to smother his rising genius in this kingdom, where, at that time, there was no great encouragement for merit, and try his fortune in London, where, by

his kind and ever-to-be-remembered recommendation, I soon followed him

It is in some sort a hardship to a rising genius in the first entrance to a regular established company, the parts are all supplied, and like under-officers in an army, they must wait for preferment, or do something extraordinary before they can expect it. An accident fell out that gave our young actor a happy opportunity

The managers had an order from the Lord Chamberlain to revive the play of "Tamerlane" for the 4th of November, 1716, which was got up with the utmost magnificence. The third night the late Mr Mills (who performed Bajazet) was taken suddenly ill, and, with much persuasion, Mr Quin was prevailed upon to read the part, which was thought a great undertaking for a young actor of his standing, but to the mortification of several competitors he succeeded so well, that the audience gave him their general applause through the whole course of the part

His friendship with that sterling, worthy old actor Ryan stood him in good stead, and was the cause of his introduction to the stage. "But an unlucky escapade obliged him to withdraw for a time to Dublin. His friends imputed this departure to the envy and jealousy of his fellows, people of twice his age thought his progress too rapid. His temper took fire at the visible depression. He bore it some time. On his return he enlisted with Rich." As in the case of so many other performers, at the bar as well as on the stage, the opportunity of success came by an accident. At Lincoln's Inn Fields there was a revival of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," in which Harper, the well-known Falstaff, was at the moment performing—a character which he had made his own. There was no one to take the part at Lincoln's Inn Fields, when Quin modestly offered himself

Said Rich "You attempt Falstaff! why you might as well think of acting Cato after Booth. The character of Falstaff,

young man, is quite another character from what you think. It is not a little snivelling part that, that—in short, that any one can do. There is not a man among you that has any idea of the part but myself. It is quite out of your walk. No, never think of Falstaff—never think of Falstaff.”

Ryan, who at that time had the ear and confidence of Rich, having heard Quin, long before he thought of coming out upon the stage, repeat some passages in the character of Falstaff, prevailed upon the manager to let Quin rehearse them before him, which he accordingly did, but not much to his master's satisfaction. However, as the case was desperate, Rich was prevailed on to let Quin play the part.

The first night of his appearance in this character he surprised and astonished the audience. Continual clappings and peals of laughter in some measure interrupted the representation, which, on that account, was prolonged to a late hour. Ryan was excellent in Ford, Spiller, reckoned among the greatest comedians of that time, performed Doctor Caius, and Baheme, another very good actor, Justice Shallow.

Now grown famous, he soon passed to Drury Lane, and, on the death of the elder Mills, succeeded to his characters. A bolder attempt, however, was that of taking up the character of Cato, in which Booth had so distinguished himself, and was therefore sacred. In this he had again extraordinary success, being received with a whirlwind of applause and shouts of “*Booth outdone!*”—a favourite and malicious theatrical cry of the time, even though the actor outdone was alive. The well-known soliloquy, “It must be so,” was encored. Mr. Quin readily complied. During the performance an incident occurred which again shows the touchy quarrelsome temper of the player at this era.

An actor named Williams, a native of Wales, performed the part of the Messenger, and in saying, “Cæsar sends health to Cato,” he pronounced the last word *Keeto*, which so annoyed Quin that he replied, “Would he had sent a better messenger.” This reply so stung Williams, that, following Quin into the

green-room when he came off the stage, after representing the injury he had done him, by making him appear ridiculous in the eyes of the audience, and hurting him in his profession, he demanded satisfaction as a gentleman. Quin, with his usual philosophy and good-humour, endeavoured to appease him. His antagonist, without further remonstrance, retired, and, waiting for Quin under the Piazza, upon his return from the tavern to his lodgings, drew and attacked him, but in the rencontre he himself received a mortal wound. Quin was tried for this affair at the Old Bailey, and the verdict was manslaughter.

It would almost seem that he was as hot-tempered as Macklin, and as unfortunate. Going into the theatre one night, he had a dispute with a young spark, and, drawing, wounded him in the hand. Again there was to be shown the usual disrespect for the stage and audience, for, making his way behind the scene, this young fellow, on Quin delivering the line, "On the blade are drops of reeking blood," called out, "You rascal, it's my blood!" To him Quin replied, "D——n your blood!" and then went on with his part. This coarseness was repeated as a capital jest.

In course of time his influence in the theatre increased. The dissolute Fleetwood found in him an excellent deputy and useful ally. His rough temper was specially suited to deal with creatures like Theo Cibber, on whom he made a not inappropriate remark too coarse to be quoted. With this person, some years later, he had an awkward rencontre, and which is characteristic of his character. "Mr. Cibber strutted into the Covent Garden office, declaring he must bring Quin to account for the manner he had spoken of him. Some friends were delighted to point him out. Mr. Quin was actually present, seated in a corner, on which Cibber made an excuse, saying that he would find another occasion. His friends, eager

for sport, assured him that Quin was leaving for Bath next day, on which Theo accosted him, asking what he meant, etc Quin at once invited him out to the Piazza, and the unlucky Theo had to follow, when, after some passes and flourishings, Theo retreated, and Quin pressing him, the latter stumbled and fell; on which Theo rushed at him and inflicted a slight wound on his forehead, then fled towards the church as for sanctuary."

Of Quin's merits as an actor, Davies, who almost came within living memory, and had seen him play, did not think very highly "No one," he said, "understood propriety in speaking so well; but he was utterly unqualified for the striking and vigorous characters of tragedy, he could neither express the tender or violent emotions of the heart, his action was forced or languid, his movement ponderous and sluggish." But again, "in characters of singular human and dignified folly, of treacherous art, contemptuous spleen, and even of pleasing gravity"—what happily-chosen phrases!—"he was excellent."



## CHAPTER X

### GARRICK'S RISE.

AMONG Mrs. Woffington's friends was a pleasing young fellow from Lichfield, a wine merchant in Durham Yard, "spract in person," as Mr. Aston would say, neatly made, and haunting the green-rooms and taverns. This was Mr Garrick, who wrote verses in the magazines in praise of his mistress and against Colley Cibber, and who was now meditating a trial of his powers on the stage. He came to town about the year 1738. His devotion to the lady led him at one time to think seriously of marriage, but her unstable character put such a step out of the question \*

When, at last, after a trial at Ipswich, he burst upon the world, on October 19th, 1741, at the little Goodman's Fields Theatre, the whole town went "horn mad" to see him. From that day his success was assured, and he advanced in steady crescendo, acquiring wealth as well as fame †

\* All this is so fully set out in the author's "Life of Garrick," as well as in other works, that I shall not trespass on the reader's patience by going over the familiar story. One of the most pleasing incidents in the composition of that life was the mode in which some descendants of Garrick—kind, amiable people, Mr and Mrs Hill, of Richmond—placed their family papers, filling a couple of large trunks, in my hands, containing all Garrick's letters, diaries, notes, and, above all, innumerable attempts at verse—a good many full of bitter reproaches to his faithless mistress

† My valued friend, the late Mr John Foister, possessed an enormous collection of Garrick's correspondence, which he generously placed at my disposal

It is a surprise to find that there were at this time performances on Christmas Day, a survival of the older custom of playing on Sundays and holidays. So late as 1742, Garrick performed in "The Fop's Fortune" at Goodman's Fields on Christmas Day.

The rise of Garrick marks an important reform in the style of acting, the solemn stilted fashion of declaiming, which had been held sacred by such professors as Quin, was abolished on the instant. Garrick introduced a vivacious, varied, and natural style; though, oddly enough, after some fifty or sixty years, when Garrick's school had been formed, this too had become stiff and formal. It is difficult, however, to judge without comparison, and, very often, long usage makes what is really excellent and legitimate appear old-fashioned and tedious. It is certain, however, that some remnant of artificiality is necessary to give dignity to recitation, and nothing is less impressive, or indeed natural, than the poor school of enunciation introduced with Mr. Robertson's plays—supposed to be nature itself, but utterly ineffective and unentertaining. The style of Mdle. Mars would, no doubt, appear strained and

for a life of the actor. He had himself long intended writing a biography on the subject, which in his hands would have been a delightful book. He was the foremost of dramatic critics. Long ago he published some curiously interesting letters, written down to Lichfield to describe this success. But the following is scarcely known.

DEAR FRIEND,

As to being settled at present, I cannot flatter myself with it, because our old friend Sir J. Bernard has threatened Mr. Giffard with fresh prosecutions, and how in the end we may fare is very doubtful. But there is a man, one Garrick, who has turned actor and does wonders here, and is being much followed, having played Richard the Third, Clodio, Chaman, and a new part in a comedy called "Pamela," which is now acting, this being the tenth night, to great audiences. But this is too good success to last, for I hear that an uncle of his hath made him large offers to leave the stage, so that by this means we shall not only lose him but a good prospect of having, if unmolested by the aforesaid magistrate, a good season.

I have been told he played during the summer season at Ipswich, but received no pay.

*peruqué*, as no doubt the style now in vogue at the Français will be by-and-by.

When Rowe's "Fair Penitent" was being performed, Quin (says Cumberland, who was present) presented himself upon the rising of the curtain in a green velvet coat embroidered down the seams, an enormous full-bottom perwig, rolled stockings, and high-heeled, square-toed shoes, with very little variation of cadence, and in deep full tones, accompanied by a sawing kind of motion which had more of the senate than the stage in it, he rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference that seemed to disdain the plaudits bestowed on him. Miss Cibber, in a key high pitched, but sweet withal, sung, or rather recitativèd, Rowe's harmonious strain somewhat in the manner of the improvisatore's. It was so extremely wanting in contrast that though it did not wound the ear it wearied it, when she had once recited two or three speeches, I could anticipate the manner of every succeeding one—it was like a long legendary ballad of innumerable stanzas, every one of which is sung to the same tune, eternally chiming to the ear without variation or relief. Mrs. Pritchard was an actress of a different cast, had more nature, and of course more change of tone, and variety both of action and expression. In my opinion the comparison was decidedly in her favour. But when, after long and eager expectation, I first beheld little Garrick, then young and light, and alive in every muscle and in every feature, come bounding on the stage, and pointing at the wittol Altamont (Ryan) and heavy-paced Horatio (Quin), heavens, what a transition! It seemed as if a whole century had been stepped over in the changing of a single scene—old things were done away, and a new order at once brought forward, light and luminous, and clearly destined to dispel the barbarisms and bigotry of a tasteless age too long attached to the prejudices of custom, and superstitiously devoted to the illusions of imposing declamation.

It may be fairly assumed that, till the coming of Garrick in 1741, these rules of stage declamation were the heritage of the old Shakespearean days. Of course the long series of poetical plays during the reign of Charles the Second must have added

"stults," but the fact remains that traditions were handed down of the Shakespearean mode of interpretation "Thus Taylor," says Davies, "was the original performer of Hamlet; and his excellencies in that character were so remarkable, that, from the remembrance of them, Sir William Davenant taught Betterton a lesson which gained him universal and lasting reputation" Sir William Davenant also recollected Lewin in "Henry the Eighth," and taught Betterton, who taught Booth, who taught Quin "He was particularly happy in preserving the true spirit of the part through the whole play. Quin, who had the good sense to admire and imitate Booth, and the honesty to own it, kept as near as possible to his great exemplar's portrait, but Quin was deficient in flexibility as well as strength of voice"

More curious still was Sir William's teaching Miss Betterton Ophelia from the pattern of the "Boy Ophelias," which he recalled One of the oddest traditions was in reference to Polonius, which was always acted by *what is termed a low comedian* by Lovell, Noakes, and Cross, in former times, who were succeeded by Griffin, Hippisley, Taswell, and Shuter, and these again by Wilson, Baddeley, and Edwin in the later times.

Garrick, however, imagined that the character had been mistaken and that Polonius was not intended as an object of mirth, and persuaded Woodward to give a serious reading of the part. The result was a failure The character appeared flat and insipid.

It was curious that in the very year of Garrick's first triumph, viz 1741, there should have been another remarkable effort, which, in its way, seems to mark a departure in the fashion of acting—when Macklin had the courage to bring forward Shakespeare's play, "The Merchant of Venice," to take the place of a melodramatic farrago, entitled "The Jew

of Venice," the work of a noble "adapter," Lord Lansdowne. In this, Shylock became a subordinate character, and was the perquisite of the low comedian of the company Macklin had the good taste to restore him to his proper influence, and determined to present him with his fitting importance to the public

"This, in its way, was one of the great reforms, and was as bold an attempt as could be conceived. Hitherto, the character of Shylock had been played as a sort of grotesque. He was the low element, made comic and ridiculous—just as some baffled Jew money-lender would be hunted through Clare Market, covered with mud and dirt, amidst the jeers of the populace. He related himself his difficulties and his success

"As soon as resolved, he communicated his design to the manager, who gave his consent to bringing it out merely as a revived piece, which might bring money to the treasury. The play was therefore announced to be in preparation, and Macklin now entered into it with all his heart and mind, by casting the parts himself, ordering frequent rehearsals, etc etc, but when he came to affix to himself the character of Shylock, and intimated his design to play it *seriously*, the laugh was universal. At every rehearsal, whilst he enjoined the rest of the performers to do their best, he himself played both under his voice and general powers. His fellow-performers publicly said, 'That this hot-headed, conceited Irishman, who had got some little reputation in a few parts, had now availed himself of the manager's favour to bring himself and the theatre into disgrace.' Fleetwood heard this, and seriously applied to Macklin to give up the part."

He himself gives an account of the night in this characteristic style.

The house was crowded, from top to bottom, with the first company in town. The two front rows of the pit, as usual,

were full of critics, who, sir, I eyed through the slit of the curtain and was glad to see there, as I wished, in such a cause, to be tried by a *special jury* When I made my appearance in the green-room, dressed for the part, with my red hat on my head, my piqued beard, loose black gown, etc etc, and with a confidence which I never before assumed, the performers all stared at one another, and evidently with a stare of disappointment Well, sir, hitherto all was right—till the last bell rung—then, I confess my heart began to beat a little.

The opening scenes being rather tame and level, I could not expect much applause, but I found myself well listened to. I could hear distinctly in the pit the words "Very well; very well, indeed!" This man seems to know what he is about," etc These encomiums warmed me, but did not overset me I knew where I should have the pull, which was in the third act, and reserved myself accordingly. At this period I threw out all my fire, and, as the contrasted passions of joy for the Merchant's losses, and grief for the elopement of Jessica, open a fine field for an actor's powers, I had the good fortune to please beyond my warmest expectations. The whole house was in an uproar of applause, and I was obliged to pause between the speeches to give it vent, so as to be heard When I went behind the scenes after this act, the manager met me, and complimented me very highly on my performance, and significantly added. "Macklin, you were right at last." My brethren in the green-room joined in his eulogium, but with different views.

On my return to the green-room, after the play was over, it was crowded with nobility and critics, who all complimented me in the warmest and most unbounded manner, and the situation I felt myself in, I must confess, was one of the most flattering and intoxicating of my whole life No money, no title, could purchase what I felt And let no man tell me after this what fame will not inspire a man to do, and how far the attainment of it will not remunerate his greatest labours! Sir, though I was not worth 50*l* in the world at that time, yet, let me tell you, I was *Charles the Great* for that night.

After his well-known triumphant visit to Dublin, "the

Garrick fever," etc , the new actor returned to London, flushed with success, to enter on an engagement with the now bankrupt manager, Fleetwood. He was to receive 560*l*, the highest salary yet given to an actor. He was to enter into rivalry with Quin, the prophet of the old school, who was to play at Covent Garden. The patentees had already forced Giffard to close his theatre by the threat of law proceedings. In September, 1742, the forces on both sides were drawn up, Fleetwood having Macklin, Pritchard, Woffington, and a lively performer, Clive, and Garrick, to encounter Quin, Mrs Cibber, and others. Quin felt bitterly the mortification of being deposed, and gave vent to it in jests and personalities, declaring that "there was a new preacher, like Whitfield, whom they all ran after, but they would soon come back to church again."

The singularly free-and-easy style of the prologues now in vogue, and the self-importance they imparted to the player, must have been prejudicial to the stage, while the tone of familiarity it engendered was hurtful to the dignity of audiences and actors. How absurd was the following, delivered on the production of a piece by Fielding, entitled "The Wedding Day," in which a cheap laugh was secured by personalities at the expense of the author himself, seated amongst the audience! Is not this licence clear evidence of the necessity of some law of restraint?

*Gentlemen and Ladies*—We must beg your indulgence, and humbly hope you'll not be offended

At an accident that happened to-night, which was not in the least intended,

I assure you—if you please, your money shall be returned—  
but Mr Garrick to-day,

Who performs a principal character in the play,

Unfortunately sent word, 'twill be impossible, having so long  
a part,

To speak the prologue—he hasn't had time to get it by heart.

I have been with the author, to know what's to be done,  
 For till the prologue's spoke, sir, says I, we can't go on  
 "Pshaw! rot the prologue," says he, "then begin without it"  
 I told him, 'twas impossible, you'd make such a rout about it,  
 Besides, 'twould be quite unprecedented—and, I dare say,  
 Such an attempt, sir, would make them damn the play  
 "Ha! damn my play!" the fidgeted bard replies,  
 "Dear Macklin, you must go on then, and apologise"  
 "Apologise! not I, pray, sir, excuse me"  
 "Zounds! something must be done—pr'ythee don't refuse me  
 Pr'ythee, go on, tell them, to damn my play will be a d——  
     hard case

Come, do, you've a good long dismal, mercy-begging face"  
 "Sir, your humble servant, you're very merry." "Yes," says  
     he, "I've been drinking,

To raise my spirits, for, by Jupiter, I've found 'em sinking"  
 So away he went to see the play. Oh! there he sits!  
 Smoke him, smoke the author, you laughing crits,  
 Isn't he finely situated for a damning oh!—oh! a—a shrill  
     whihee? O direful yell!

But to the prologue It began—

"To-night the comic author of to-day,  
 Has writ a—a—a something about a play,  
 And, as the bee—the bee—(that he brings by way of simile)  
     the bee which roves

Through—through"—pshaw! pox o' my memory!—oh!—  
     "through fields and groves,

So comic poets in fair London town,  
 To cull the flowers of characters, wander up and down"  
 Then there was a good deal about Rome, Athens, and dramatic  
     rules,

And characters of knaves and courtiers, authors and fools,  
 And a vast deal about critics, and good-nature, and the poor  
     author's fear,

And, I think, there was something about a third night hoping  
     to see you here

"Twas all such stuff as this, not worth repeating,  
 In the old prologue cant, and then at last concludes, thus  
     kindly greeting,

"To you, the critic jury of the pit,



Our culprit author doth his cause submit  
 With justice, nay, with candour judge his wit.  
 Give him, at least, a patient, quiet hearing,  
 If guilty, damn him, if not guilty, clear him " \*

And this was actually written by the author himself<sup>1</sup>

After this, the administration was becoming deplorable. The low tastes of the manager were exhibited in bringing on rope-dancers and tumblers. He hired from Sadler's "monsters," such as were exhibited at fairs, clowns and others. His intimate friends were gamblers. A money-lender, named Pierson, was virtual director of the theatre, and ground down the actors, and occasionally bailiffs were found in possession. The embarrassments of the manager were insurmountable. Salaries were unpaid, and matters behind the scenes disorderly. Macklin, who, with his wife, belonged to the company, was at this time on friendly terms with Garrick, and already preparing a revolt.

The principal actors held conferences together for the redress of their grievances. Deputations waited upon the manager and threatened. He received them with politeness, acknowledged his faults with ingenuousness, and promised reparation.

Mr. Garrick invited all the players to his lodgings about the latter end of the summer of 1743, and proposed to them to enter into an agreement to secede from Drury Lane, upon condition that no person was to accept of any terms from the patentee without the consent of all the seceders. He added that he entertained great hopes of their being able to procure permission from the Lord Chamberlain to set up for themselves at the Opera House, or somewhere else. He placed great reliance, he said, upon the humanity and goodness of the

\* A pleasant story is told by Mr. Murphy, of Fielding's *insouciance* in reference to this play. Garrick asking him to take out a dangerous passage, the author said "No, if the scene is not a good one, let them find that out." On the night of the performance the author sat in the green-room drinking

Duke of Grafton, who was at that time Lord Chamberlain. He argued there was a case exactly in point, where the great Betterton, Mrs Barry, and other actors, as we have seen, were relieved from the oppressive tyranny of Christopher Rich, the old patentee of Drury Lane Playhouse, by the benevolent Earl of Dorset, who had been formerly Lord Chamberlain

Macklin, however, was of opinion that it was much better for them to go once more to the manager, and tell him, in an open and manly manner, what they intended to do, before they took so rash a step, and before they proceeded to actual extremities. To this Garrick objected, on the ground that an exposure of their plan was the surest manner of enabling the manager to defeat their application to the Lord Chamberlain. In this he was supported by all the other performers, who contended that it would be the highest absurdity to remonstrate any more with Mr Fleetwood, and that his baseness and cruelty towards them did not entitle him to their candour or generosity. That, in order to remove any scruples that Mr Macklin might entertain in the business, an agreement was to be formally drawn out, and immediately signed by all the parties, whereby it was covenanted that neither of the contracting parties should accommodate matters with the patentee without a comprehension of the other.

The performers immediately adopted this proposition, and Macklin was compelled to yield to the voice of the majority. About a dozen of the performers, the chief of whom were Garrick, Macklin, Havard, Berry, Blakes, Mills, and Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs Clive, and Mrs Mills, immediately entered into an association and signed the agreement. There were others invited to become members. The next step that was to be taken after this secession was to address the Duke of Grafton. They undertook, at the same time, to confirm every particular by affidavit. The petition was laid before the Lord Chamberlain, and an interview followed soon after, which turned out very unfavourable for the petitioners. Whatever the motives were that influenced the duke, the players were given to understand that they had very little countenance to expect from that quarter.

In this posture of affairs the patentee exerted himself, and

The seceders found all their efforts to obtain a new patent ineffectual, and the manager was little better circumstanced with regard to his fresh *troops* ! The period at which the theatres usually open having arrived, Mr Fleetwood resolved to hazard everything, and to announce the representation of "The Conscious Lovers" for the 20th of September, 1743. As soon as Mr Garrick discovered that the Lord Chamberlain was not favourably disposed towards the cause of the players, he thought the best mode to be pursued was to make the best terms with Mr Fleetwood, and a negotiation was immediately set on foot, and a proposition of accommodation was made by Mr Garrick, in which he included some of his friends, such as he thought would be absolutely necessary to the manager in his then harassed condition. This proposition was made without the privity of Macklin, without the consent of the whole of the seceders, and consequently in violation of a solemn agreement. As soon as the object of this underhanded negotiation became known, Macklin called upon Garrick and reproached him in bitter terms. He accused him of perfidy and apostacy, and insisted upon his adhering to the articles of their agreement. But this was in vain, for Garrick was now resolved upon an accommodation with Mr. Fleetwood, at the expense even of his honour and character.

The proposition of reconciliation was agreed to, and Garrick and a few others were admitted again into favour. But this was not all. Garrick contrived, during the negotiation, to get his own salary increased, and to procure the same annual stipends for his friends that they enjoyed previous to their secession. The rest of the unfortunate players were left to shift for themselves as well as they could. These poor people, rather than starve, threw themselves on the mercy of the patentee, who employed them, indeed, but at the same time took care to abridge them of half their salary. The revolt of the players was ascribed by Mr Fleetwood principally to Macklin, whose ingratitude he determined to punish, for such he termed his conduct in this transaction.

Davies, speaking of this affair, says Mr Macklin had no inclination to become the scapegoat in this business, and he urged Mr Garrick to perfect the articles of their agreement, by which it was covenanted that neither of the contracting parties

should accommodate matters with the patentee without a comprehension of the other *Mr Garrick could not but acknowledge the justice of Mr Macklin's plea* By way of extenuation, he goes on, and says Mr Garrick offered Mr Macklin a sum, to be paid weekly out of his income, for a certain time, till the manager could be brought into better temper, or he should have it in his power to provide for himself in a manner suitable to his rank in the theatre He obtained a promise of Mr Rich to give Mrs. Macklin a weekly salary of 3*l* These proposals were strenuously rejected by Mr Macklin in his claim of Mr Garrick's absolutely fulfilling the tenor of their compact. Mr Garrick, notwithstanding the perseverance of Mr Macklin, accepted Fleetwood's proposals, and entered into a covenant with him for that season, at a very considerable income, I believe 600*l* or 700*l*

The public were so much incensed at the flagitious conduct of Mr Garrick, that, on the night of his first appearance afterwards, in the part of Bayes, he was treated with much severity. Davies says "As soon as Mr Garrick entered, he bowed very low several times, and, with the most submissive action, entreated to be heard He was saluted with loud hisses and continual cries of 'Off! off! off!' All Mr Garrick's attempts to pacify them were rejected with disdain." The manager, however, had called in his friends and associates from Hockley-in-the-Hole and the Bear Garden. These were distributed in great plenty in the pit and galleries, armed with sticks and bludgeons, with positive orders from their commanding officer to check the zeal of Macklin's friends by the weightiest arguments in their power This theatrical tempest lasted two nights, but the obstinacy of the manager and the weighty arguments of his associates at length prevailed, and shielded Mr. Garrick from the just vengeance of the public. Mr Macklin wrote a pamphlet, ascribed at that time to Mr Corbyn Morris, in which he laid his whole case before the public

It was nearly certain that these riots were stirred up by Macklin, assisted by his friend Barrowby, a doctor that "hung loose" upon the town, and who had at last to restrain the actor's

violence. Notwithstanding this, Garrick and he were reconciled, and we later find the truculent player making his bow once more to the Drury Lane audience.

The profits, salaries, etc., at the end of Mr. Garrick's second season were as follow

	1742-43	£	s	d
Mr. Garrick	.	630	0	0
Two clear benefits, one paying 50 <i>l</i> .		500	0	0
Macklin, 9 <i>l</i> 9 <i>s</i> a week, and 6 <i>l</i> 6 <i>s</i> certain for his wife, who acted a few times		525	0	0
A clear benefit, and hers, paying 50 <i>l</i> .		230	0	0
Mrs Woffington, 7 <i>l</i> 10 <i>s</i> certain, clear benefit	.	180	0	0
Cloaths	.	50	0	0
Mrs Pritchard, 7 <i>l</i> 10 <i>s</i> certain		250	0	0
Clear benefit	.	180	0	0
Cloaths	.	50	0	0
Mills, jun., 6 <i>l</i> certain	.	200	0	0
Benefit, paying 25 <i>l</i>	.			
Mrs Clive, 15 <i>l</i> 15 <i>s</i> certain	.	525	0	0
Clear benefit		200	0	0
Cloaths	.	50	0	0
Tickets at her benefit, as per agreement		21	0	0
		<hr/>		
		£4001	0	0
Deduct other salaries	.	1419	13	1
		<hr/>		
Increase.	.	£2581	6	11
		<hr/>		

NB—The benefits are computed by the account of the house, and no computation made of *gold tickets*, which are sometimes very considerable. "Gold tickets" were presents in money—ten and twenty guineas from noble patrons.

Macklin, when outcast, saw no resource but to set up a sort of school of elocution, a scheme he adopted several times in his life. He began, or rather offered, to give instructions in the science of acting. Among his pupils were Foote, Dr.

Hill, and others, and soon after he produced some of these recruits at the Haymarket, Mr. Foote taking the part of Othello. It must have been an odd performance. One of his pupils later gave this account of the old master's system in one of his many journals

In Macklin's garden there were three long parallel walks, and his method of exercising the voice was thus. His two young pupils with back boards (such as they use in boarding-schools) walked firmly, slow, and well, up and down the two side walks, Macklin himself paraded the centre walk at the end of every twelve paces he made them stop, and turning gracefully, the young actor called out across the walk, "How do you do, Miss Ambrose?" She answered, "Very well, I thank you, Mr. Glenville." They then took a few more paces, and the next question was, "Do you not think it a very fine day, Mr Glenville?" "A very fine day, indeed, Miss Ambrose," was the answer. Their walk continued; and then, "How do you do, Mr. Glenville?" "Pretty well, I thank you, Miss Ambrose." And this exercise continued for an hour or so (Macklin still keeping in the centre walk), in the full hearing of their religious next-door neighbours. Such was Macklin's method of training the management of the voice, if too high, too low, a wrong accent, or a faulty inflection, he immediately noticed it, and made them repeat the words twenty times till all was right\*. It was his manner to check all the cant and cadence of tragedy, he would bid his pupil first speak the passage as he would in common life, if he had occasion to pronounce the same words, and then giving them more force, but preserving the same accent, to deliver them on the stage. When the player was faulty in his stops or accents he set him right; and with nothing more than this attention to what is natural, he produced, out of the most ignorant persons, players that surprised everybody, the Montano mentioned before was one of these, and this instruction was the source of his merit. People were pleased with a sensible delivery on this little stage. Tragedy has now no

\* This system of the old actor is also described humorously enough by other performers many years later

peculiar accent or tone, but the most outrageous scenes of it are spoken according to Mr Macklin's plan, as the same words would be pronounced in common speech, only with more energy.

It is characteristic, even thus early, to note the part the pleasant Clive takes in this *émeute* by her ever-courageous and outspoken conduct. The indomitable "Pivy" now, perhaps, surprised the town by an appeal in the shape of a "lean" pamphlet, "The Case of Mrs Clive submitted to the Public," detailing the way she had been treated by the managers. These grievances of the sensitive players never seem very serious. The point of the whole seemed to be that she was now without an engagement. Before the late disputes it seems she had "articled" for three years at the rate of 800*l.* a year, "although *another player* there received for seven years 500 guineas." After the revolt and the return to their duties, offers were made to her by both houses, and she accepted those of Covent Garden. It was always the custom, she said, that when an actor was discharged, or his allowance lessened, he received official notice at the end of the season, and this was given in the case of all save herself, and she only learned the fact by finding herself out of the bills at the commencement of the new season. The manager, indeed, might consider that he could treat his actors like servants, but servants, she urged, had thousands of other places to go to, actors had only the two theatres. She then makes the following spirited and temperate statement of her merits and services

I am sorry I am reduced to say anything in favour of myself, but as I think I merit as much as another performer, and the managers are so desirous to convince me of the contrary, I hope I shall be excused, especially when I declare that at this time I am not in the least vain of my profession.

I may venture to affirm that my labour and application have been greater than any other performers I have not only acted in almost all the plays but in farces and musical entertainments, and very frequently two parts in a night, even to the prejudice of my health. I have been at a great expense in masters for singing, for which article alone the managers now give 5*l* and 6*l* a week. My additional expenses in belonging to the theatre amount to upwards of 100*l* a year, in clothing and other necessities, so that the pretended great salary of 10*l* and 12*l* a week are not more than half that amount, since the performances are only on three or four days a week.

I find (says the author of Theo Cibber's "Apology") by our theatrical squabbles and altercations we make as much amusement to the town in a morning as by our performance in an evening. The contentions for the part of Polly between Mrs Clive and my late—I was going to say wife—but a late woman who was called by my name. That contest, I remark, furnished a copious topic for conversation, argument, and publication, and ended with noise and uproars in the playhouse. There has been the same thing practised by Monsieur Denoyer and Mademoiselle Roland, and before by Monsieur Portier and Mademoiselle Roland, versus Messieurs Qun and Fleetwood, and yet another, which made not a little noise, between the two Harlequins, Messieurs Philips and Woodward. The consequence of all these addresses has been this the town is called into the playhouse, as the *dermier ressort*, to judge of things.

Chetwood thus quaintly sketches this spirited performer

This celebrated natural actress was the daughter of Mr William Raftor, a gentleman born in the city of Kilkenny in Ireland. The father of her father was possessed of a considerable paternal estate in the county where he was born; but the parent of our actress being unhappily attached to the unfortunate King James the Second, the late Revolution gave it, among many others, to the Crown. Mr. James Raftor, her brother, went over to Ireland some years ago in order to solicit for his grandfather's fortune, but did not meet with success.



Mr William Raftor, the father, was bred to the law; however, when King James was in Ireland he entered into his service, and after the decisive Battle of the Boyne in the year 1690, he followed his master's fortune, and by his merit obtained a captain's commission in the service of Louis the Fourteenth, but gaining a pardon, with many other gentlemen in his condition, he came to England, where he married Mrs Daniel, daughter of an eminent citizen on Fish Street Hill, with whom he had a handsome fortune. By her he had a numerous issue. Miss Catherine was born in the year 1711. She had an early genius for the stage, for she told me, when she was about twelve years old, Miss Johnston (afterwards the first wife of Mr Theo Cibber, another rising genius, if death had not overtaken her in her prime of youth) and she used to tag after the celebrated Mr Wilks (her own words) whenever they saw him in the streets, and gape at him as a wonder. Miss Raftor had a facetious turn of humour and infinite spirits, with a voice and manner in singing songs of pleasantry peculiar to herself. Those talents, Mr Theo Cibber and I (we all at that time living together in one house) thought a sufficient passport to the theatre. We recommended her to the Laureate, whose infallible judgment soon found out her excellencies, and the moment he heard her sing put her down in the list of performers at 20s per week. But never any person of her age flew to perfection with such rapidity, and the old discerning managers always distinguished merit by reward. Her first appearance was in the play of "Mithridates, King of Pontus," in "Ismenes," the page to Ziphares, in boy's cloaths, where a song proper to the circumstances of the scene was introduced, which she performed with extraordinary applause. But after this, like a bullet in the air, there was no distinguishing the track till it came to its utmost execution. I remember the first night of "Love in a Riddle" (which was murdered in the same year), a pastoral opera wrote by the Laureate, which the hydra-headed multitude resolved to worry without hearing, a custom with authors of merit, when Miss Raftor came on in the part of Phillida, the monstrous roar subsided. A person in the stage-box, next to my post, called out to his companion in the following elegant style "Zounds, Tom take care or this charming little devil will save all."

In the year 1732 she was married to Mr G Clive, son to Mr Baron Clive I shall be silent in conjugal affairs, but in all my long acquaintance with her I could never imagine she deserved ill-usage I shall take leave of this excellent actress with the following lines (as every part cannot fit the best performers)

Merit mistaken oft may lose its way,  
And pore in darkness with the blaze of day.



Period the Fourth.

FROM GARRICK'S MANAGEMENT TO HIS RETIREMENT,  
1747-1776.



## CHAPTER I

### GARRICK AS MANAGER.

Now, at last, the fall of Fleetwood could be no longer averted.

We are now (says Mr. Victor) arrived to the year 1745, when Mr Fleetwood (whose body was as much impaired by an excessive gout as his fortune by his misconduct) began to think of retreating from an employment he was no longer able to appear in, and wished to retire to the south of France. Having already mortgaged the patent to Sir John de Loime and one Mr Masters for 3000*l*, he took up 7000*l* more on the cloaths, scenes, etc, of one Mr More, who was put into possession of the house and treasury, that he might pay himself out of the receipts, Mr Fleetwood having induced him to believe that the said 7000*l* would release the patent and satisfy all other demands upon the theatre. The truth was soon after revealed by an advertisement, in which notice was given that the patent was to be sold before a Master in Chancery. Mr More, offended at the chicanery he had met with, would advance no more money, and, on the other hand, he wished to have the patent to secure what he had advanced.

A significant comment on the extravagance of this "fast" manager is furnished by a sale advertisement of that day

To be sold by auction, at Craven House, by Mr Tones, on Thursday, May 1st, 1740, the rich household furniture of Charles Fleetwood, Esq, at his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, consisting

of rich Genoa damask, all sorts of furniture made in the most elegant manner, a most valuable collection of original pictures by the most celebrated masters, plate, china, and curiosities; with books, most of them gilt-lettered and printed on large paper. The public may be assured that this is a genuine sale.

There is one scene which adds a tragic interest to the fate of this ruined manager. Mrs Howard, a lady who was later married to the Duke of Norfolk, happened to be at Bruges with a companion, daughter of a baronet. At the same place was Mrs Fleetwood, herself a lady of good family, and daughter to Lord Gerard. Hearing that Mrs. Howard was in the town, she went up on a visit and flung herself upon her knees to ask pardon of Mrs Howard's companion. She had prevented her son marrying this lady, to whom he was attached, but who had little fortune. She had married him to a lady with much more, and he plunged into dissipation, ruined himself by gambling, setting out first as a dupe, afterwards turning sharper. At length he died unpitied and, it is said, of a broken heart.\*

Lacy—"a man of the name of Lacy"—is described by Sir John Hawkins in a very contemptuous fashion. Entering, it seems, into a sort of mountebank competition with "Orator Henley," he had been delivering a sort of profane lecture, which he called "Peter's Visitation," and soon attracted the attention of the authorities, who seized and imprisoned him as a vagrant. This was not of much promise for the manager of a theatre. After which, the law having silenced the Haymarket Theatre, he read lectures at York Buildings, designed and erected the spacious building for musical entertainments in Ranelagh Gardens at Chelsea, and having sold it to one "Burnaby, Esq.," for 4000*l.* premium, became an assistant-manager to Mr Rich.

\* Deleted in the Duke of Norfolk's "Thoughts, Essays," etc

When the patent was advertised for sale, two reputable persons in the City, strangers to Mr Lacy, came to a resolution to buy it, in case he, Mr Lacy, could be prevailed upon to undertake the management of the company. The terms offered were a joint partnership, they to lay down the whole purchase-money and hold Mr Lacy's third in mortgage, in case it did not suit him to make his own deposit, till his share of the profits should gradually discharge it. A meeting of the parties followed, but the very next day all was disjoined again by the sudden indisposition of one of the contractors, which rendered him incapable of carrying the affair into execution, to the great concern of Messrs Green and Amber, bankers, who were present at this meeting, and who were to have been bankers to the theatre in case any surplus cash had arisen from it. To these gentlemen Mr. Lacy was not unknown, and, after what had passed, it was but natural for them to think of putting themselves in the citizens' places. They did so, and proposed the same conditions to Mr. Lacy, provided he could prevail first on Mr Fleetwood to accept of an annuity during the term of the patent, and secondly on Mr More, to let his mortgage be. Mr Lacy succeeded in both. Mr More acquiesced on having his security for the former sum strengthened by the addition of the patent, and Mr Fleetwood was very well satisfied to receive 600*l.* a year out of a wreck which, as to him, scarce appeared to be worth saving. And Messrs Green and Amber paid down 3200*l.* for the patent. They broke some time afterwards, and the ignorant and malicious were pleased to surmise that their misfortunes were owing to this purchase, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Messrs Green and Amber, being "receivers" of taxes, were at that time accountable to the Exchequer for about 20,000*l.* (of which 3200*l.* was but a small part), and not being in a condition to answer so great a demand, sunk under it.

With the state of the kingdom that of the theatre sympathised. Thin audiences produce but thin receipts, debts consequently were contracted. Mr Lacy's situation was now become a very uneasy one, but his candour and integrity, like the other's courage and perseverance, carried him through them all. One attempt, indeed, was made to overturn him,



which, serving as a specimen of theatrical policy, may not prove altogether unentertaining to the reader. The mortgagee came one morning to the theatre, and, having collected the company together, gave them to understand they were to have no more salary that season. It was about the end of January, and, according to the tenure of the mortgage, there was but a small sum due to this gentleman at that time. This so unexpected a declaration greatly astonished the actors.

Intelligence was soon brought to Mr. Lacy of what had passed, and he as soon applied to the mortgagee for an explanation, announcing, as he had a right to do, that he, the mortgagee, must abide by all consequences, he having no power to issue any money either to actor or creditor but by the direction of Mr. Lacy, and being responsible to neither for any debt or demand. Struck with this representation, the mortgagee seemed to be much concerned for his rashness, and of his own accord promised to continue the several salaries, without stopping 1s. more during the season, and he kept his word.

Early, however, in the following year the course of events, it was plain, was favourably preparing everything for the coming of Garrick into management—one of the most fortunate circumstances conceivable for the welfare of the British stage. Without his wholesome influence and sagacity, it is difficult to realise what would have become of the interest of the drama, for the patent, as was the case of Covent Garden later, was likely enough to become the prey of mere speculators, or, at least, of common “business men.” Garrick was of the race of genuine managers. But though he was to become Mr. Lacy’s partner and friend, their intercourse as manager and actor had been rather stormy.

A curious unpublished letter of the new actor, Garrick, shows how eager his spirit was, and how combative. The last declaration of becoming a volunteer is characteristic.

I have received a most surprising epistle from Mr Lacy, full of false accusations, many of 'em contradictory, and interspers'd with low weak calumny and defamation The conjunction of two evil planets last summer boded me no good, but, trusting to the justice of my cause, I defy and despise their influence . He has sent me an offer of 500*l* for three years, to come into a general article, and be obliged to play whenever he pleases, all which I have rejected I won't agree for three years, I will have the salary I have had hitherto, and all my arrears shall be paid I am not able to act two principal characters two nights successively in short, I promoted the interest of the managers last season beyond my ability, and when Mr Sheridan and Mrs Cibber did not play, I did my utmost for the good of the house. . Whenever you hear any report that prejudices me, pray let me know, and I will trouble you with a full answer to it . . I write to you without connection or correction I am now in a room full of brothers and sisters, the greater part is female, and consequently more noisy and confounding. . Take pot-luck with me when you please, I'll do the same with you, and damn all formality between us The country is much alarmed by the rebels, for my own part I have little fear of 'em, and intend offering my service as a volunteer, as I shall have no other engagements upon me, and cannot be better employ'd 'Till these gentlemen have done playing the knave in the north, I can't think of playing the fool

Mrs. Cibber, who was at this time trying to attach the young actor to her interests, attempted to inflame him against Lacy She could write to him with a pleasing vivacity In December, 1745, she had proposed to play for raising soldiers to put down the rebellion, and thus describes to her friend Garrick how the proposal was met.

The advertisements against me have been found to be sent to the printers by Mr Lacy's porter, and, as I am assured, are the united works of Lacy, Macklin, and Giffard, so much wit, honesty, and good-nature can scarce be the product of a single person. The morning my first advertisement came out,

I wrote Lacy a very civil letter, desiring to know if he consented to my proposal, also that he would acquaint me with the charge of his house. He told my servant he was too busy to send an answer, but half an hour after ten at night, a dirty fellow came to my house, and left word I might do it, but it must be put off a day longer than I proposed. I heard that night that the green-room was in an uproar. I was cursed with all the elegance of phrase that reigns behind the scenes, and Mrs Clive swore she would not play the part of Lucy. The next morning Mr. Rich sent me an offer of his house, that he would give the whole receipts to the veteran scheme, and that he should always esteem it a great obligation done to him, that he had sent to Mr Cibber, who promised he would never come near the house during the rehearsals or performances, and that Mr Rich would answer with his life he should keep his word. so I concluded it the same day, which was Sunday. The next morning came out the advertisement of my being a rigid Roman Catholic, etc. The answer I made to it might have been much better wrote, but I had nobody to consult but myself. Though Mr. Rich had no performance at his house the night of "The Recruiting Officer," Drury Lane playhouse was not above half full till the latter account, then it was a good house, but not near so great as we had all last winter to "The Orphan." He had built up the stage, but as nobody came there, he shut in a flat scene to hide it, and the next day he played "The Tender Husband" to 15l.

Besides the interest of a well-written letter, we have here a lively sketch of life behind the scenes.

The chevalier whom Peregrine Pickle met in Paris, criticising the English performers, declared to him "that their theatre was adorned by one woman (referring to Mrs Cibber) whose sensibility and sweetness of voice is such as I have never observed on any other stage. She has, besides, an elegance of person and expression of features that wonderfully adapt her for the most engaging characters. One of your *gratioso's* utterance is a continual sing-song, *like the chanting of vespers, and his action resembles the heaving of ballast into the hold of a*

*ship* In his outward deportment he seems to have confounded the ideas of dignity and insolence of mien, acts the crafty, cool, designing Crookback as a loud, shallow, blustering Hector, nay, so ridiculous is the behaviour of him and Cassius at their interview, that, setting boot to foot, and grinning at each other with the aspect of two cobblers enraged, they thrust then left sides together with repeated shocks, that the hilts of their swords may clash for the entertainment of the audience The despair of a great man this English Æsopus represents by beating his own forehead and bellowing like a bull, indeed, in all his most interesting scenes performing such strange shakings of the head and other antic gesticulations" Such is the lively and graphic description of Smollett.

Mr Riddle, Mr Green's father-in-law, receiver for the county of Bedford, had an extent in aid for about 16,000*l* against his son and his son's partner, and had attached their property in the theatre He signified this design to Mr Lacy, and desired him farther to transact the affair for him Mr Lacy undertook it accordingly, and thinking Mr Garrick, on account of his abilities and reputation, and Mr More, on account of his connection with the theatre, the properest persons to be applied to, made a tender of the two shares Mr More replied that Mr Garrick would not be concerned in a third part, probably from an apprehension that the other two proprietors might concur in laying him under disagreeable restraints Mr Lacy then offered the shares to Mr Ellis of the Tower, who had always been tampering with the theatres But he would not give 1000*l*, he would not give 800*l* for it, exclusive of the debts On this Mr Lacy made an offer to Mr Riddle to pay off the mortgage, as well as the other debts of the theatre, which together amounted to 12,000*l*, exclusive of Mr Fleetwood's annuity, if he would join his interest with him in procuring a new patent, to commence at the expiration of the old To this proposal Mr Riddle agreed, and Mr Lacy, in consequence, became a suitor to his Grace the late Duke of Grafton, as

Lord Chamberlain His grace's reply was, "That he saw no injury resulting from such a renewal to anybody." He promised to lay the affair before His Majesty

Lacy had many great and powerful patrons besides The late Lady Burlington engaged the then Marquis of Hartington to support him with all his interest, and to his goodness he owed the countenance of the late Duke of Devonshire his father, and the concurrence of the Treasury, then under the direction of Mr. Pelham, who was not the less favourable to him, because Mr Roberts, his secretary, lost no opportunity of enforcing his suit There was yet another circumstance, which it is not altogether improbable was of some little weight in Mr Lacy's scale It hath been often remarked that the Duke of Grafton paid a particular regard to those families which had suffered in the cause of King Charles the First, and it was not unknown to his grace that the Lacys of Ireland, from whom the gentleman we are speaking of was descended, were absolutely ruined by their attachment to that monarch, having lost a vast estate and been forced to follow fortune in almost all the different services of Europe \*

Mr Lacy having thus carried his great point, was directed by his prudence to Mr Garrick In his Ranelagh scheme, it had been his misfortune to be yoked with a wicked one, which was the reason of his quitting it. Mr Garrick had money, reputation, and ability—all were requisites. Mr Lacy made the advance, Mr Garrick, by the advice of his friends, accepted it, and had his name inserted in the new patent Both were to be equal sharers in the profits, with an exception to the considerations allowed Mr Garrick as a performer It was in the year 1747 that their partnership commenced, and it has continued ever since with all the appearance of harmony and friendship

The agreement between the new patentees was as follows

April 9, 1747

Agreement made the 9th of April, 1747, between James Lacy, of Great Queen Street, near Lincoln's Inn Fields, in the

\* Another account states that he won the duke by attending on him when

county of Middlesex, gentleman, of the one part, and David Garrick, of James Street, Covent Garden, gentleman, of the other part Whereas it is alleged by the said James Lacy that he is possessed of or entitled unto the present patent under which plays are exhibited at the theatre in Drury Lane, in the county aforesaid, for the remainder of a term whereof there are now six years to come, and of and unto the scenes and wardrobe belonging to or used at the said theatre, and also to a lease of the said house or theatre for the remainder of a term whereof there are now about five years to come, subject nevertheless to a certain trust, incumbrances, and debts, viz. A trust as to two equal third parts of the said patent, scenes, wardrobe, and lease for Messrs Green and Amber, late of the Strand, in the county aforesaid, bankers, or for their creditors. A mortgage from the said Lacy to the said Green and Amber, for 2250*l* and interest, with a covenant for sharing any new patent that should be obtained, the whole valued at 4000*l* A mortgage to Hutchenson Meure, whereon the principal and interest that will be due at the end of this acting season is computed to amount to . The debts that will then remain due to the actors and performers of the said theatre, also computed at about . . . The debts that will then remain due to the tradesmen, etc belonging to the said theatre, which are also computed at about . The debts that will then remain due from the said Lacy to others, and shall have been by him borrowed and applied for discharging any of the arrears due to the said actors, performers, and tradesmen, etc. since the end of the last season, and which are also computed at about An annuity of 300*l* to Mr Cawthoipe An annuity of 500*l*. to Charles Fleetwood, Esq And whereas it is alleged by the said James Lacy that he can and will before the end of the next month procure a new patent for twenty-one years to commence from the expiration of the former, without any other gratuity or expense than the common and ordinary fees, and to be subject only to a like annuity of 300*l* to Mr Cawthoipe, or some other person, and that he can and will within the time aforesaid procure a good and sufficient assignment, release, or other conveyance of all the right, title, and interest, both equitable and legal, of the said Messrs Green and Amber, and of their creditors, assigns, or representatives, and all other persons

claiming under them in and to both the said patents, lease, wardrobe, and scenes, for the said sum of 4000*l*. And that all the above-stated incumbrances (including the said 4000*l*, and the common and ordinary fees of procuring the said new patent, but exclusive of the said Mr Cawthorpe's and Mr Fleetwood's annuities) will not exceed the sum of 12,000*l* in the whole. Now it is hereby agreed, that in case the said James Lacy shall and does within the time aforesaid procure such a new patent, on the terms aforesaid, in the joint names of the said James Lacy and David Garrick, and also such assignment, release, and conveyance as aforesaid, on the terms aforesaid, to them the said James Lacy and David Garrick, they the said James Lacy and David Garrick, their executors, administrators, and assigns shall, and will, from the end of this present acting season, become, and be jointly and equally possessed of and interested in the said two several patents, and the said lease, wardrobe, and scenes, subject to the respective incumbrances aforesaid, for the several terms that will remain and be in the said patents respectively, but without any benefit of survivorship, and shall and will enter into and execute proper articles of copartnership for the carrying on and managing the business of the said patents for their joint and equal benefit. And that as soon as such new patent and right in the old patent, etc shall be procured as aforesaid, the same shall be immediately conveyed to two persons, of which each of the said parties shall name and appoint one, upon trust, as a security from each of the said parties to the other for the performance of their respective agreements and covenants, both in these presents and in the said articles of copartnership to be contained. That the said incumbrances on the said patents shall be paid off and discharged as soon as may be, by and out of the profits to arise in the said copartnership, or equally by and between the said parties. Provided, that in case the said incumbrances (exclusive of the said annuities) shall exceed the said sum of 12,000*l* the difference or excess shall be made good, paid and discharged by the said James Lacy, or his assigns, or out of his or their moiety of the said profits, and the said David Garrick, and his assigns, and his or their moiety of the said patents, etc are to be fully indemnified therefrom. Provided

wise, take and retain for their private expenses, and under the title of managers, out of the money to be in the hands of the treasurer or cashier of the said copartnership, any sum not exceeding the rate of 500*l* per annum each. Provided also, that in case the profits shall at any time fall short of the said two sums of 500*l* per annum, to each of the said parties, and either of the said shall, notwithstanding, have occasion for and actually draw out or receive on account of the said allowance, more than his share of the net profits then in the treasury or office shall amount unto, then and in every such case the said party shall be made debtor for the sums by him so drawn out or received, together with legal interest, until his share of the net profits shall be sufficient to answer the same, and in the meantime his share of the patent, etc shall stand charged therewith as a security to the other of the said parties. Provided also, and it is expressly agreed, that the said David Garrick shall have and be paid a clear salary of 500 guineas per annum as an actor, with a clear benefit, or shall have such better terms as shall at any time during the said copartnership be given to any actor or actress, but the said David Garrick shall not, during the time of his being interested in the said patents, or either of them, act or perform, except for the joint benefit of the parties concerned in the said patents. Provided also, that in settling the incumbrances aforesaid, the said James Lacy is to account for the receipts of this present season, it being the intent of the parties that the arrears due to the actors, performers, and tradesmen at the end of the last season are to be the bases of their respective accounts, from or to which the profits or loss of this present season are to be respectively subtracted or added. Provided also, that if either party shall discharge any of the said debts or incumbrances, or lend or advance any money to or for the said copartnership more than the other of the said parties, then and in every such case the party so lending or advancing shall have and be allowed legal interest in the account of the said copartnership until the other party shall have advanced his proportion. Provided also, that if either party shall be minded to sell or dispose of his share the other party shall have the refusal thereof at such a price as two persons, one to be named by each party, shall value the same at. Lastly, if any dispute or difference shall happen, the same



to be referred to two arbitrators to be named within twenty-four hours.

Under the management of Messrs. Garrick and Lacy the new Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, opened on September 15th. They had been untiring in their labours, altering and remodeling the house and making new approaches. Lacy, the prompter tells us, showed as much address in altering the accommodation as he would have done about his patent, and the house was contrived to hold 40% more than before, while the lax system of admissions was duly controlled by a system of tickets, so that the old "whipping and frisking in and out" was abolished. Reform upon the stage was even more needed.

At the bottom of bills for September 15th to October 17th appeared this notice "As the admittance of persons behind the scenes has occasioned a general complaint on account of the frequent interruption to the performances, it is hoped gentlemen will not be offended that no money will be taken for the future"

In the year 1749 an extraordinary advertisement appeared in the papers. It was incredible that such folly should be accepted.

At the new theatre in the Haymarket, on Monday next, the 16th instant, to be seen, a person who performs the several most surprising things following—viz first, he takes a common walking-cane from any of the spectators, and thereon plays the music of every instrument now in use, and likewise sings to surprising perfection. Secondly, he presents you with a common wine-bottle, which any of the spectators may first examine, this bottle is placed on a table in the middle of the stage, and he (without any equivocation) goes into it in sight of all the spectators, and sings in it, during his stay in the bottle any person may handle it, and see plainly that it does not exceed a common tavern bottle. Those on the stage or in the boxes may come in masked habits (if agreeable to

To begin at half an hour after six o'clock Tickets to be had at the theatre The performance continues about two hours and a half NB If any gentleman or lady, after the above performance (either singly or in company, in or out of mask), are desirous of seeing a representation of any deceased person, such as husband or wife, sister or brother, or any intimate friend of either sex, upon making a gratuity to the performer, shall be gratified by seeing and conversing with them for some minutes, as if alive, likewise (if desired), he will tell you the most secret thoughts in your past life, and give you a full view of persons who have injured you, whether dead or alive For those gentlemen and ladies who are desirous of seeing this last part, there is a private room provided These performances have been seen by most of the crowned heads of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and never appeared public anywhere but once; but will wait at any of their houses and perform as above for 5l each time There will be a proper guard to keep the house in due decorum

This, as is well known, was a hoax of the Duke of Montague's, which ended in the wrecking of the theatre, all the furniture being dragged out and burnt in the street, the curtain of the stage being hoisted on a pole.

By the remarkable notice at the bottom of the bills, which became for years a standing advertisement, Garrick banished all the young "bloods." It is extraordinary that so cultivated and well-graced a player should not have thought of yet another reform upon his boards, viz that of costume, and, as can be seen from Zoffany's pictures in the Garrick Club, we have him in "Macbeth" in a bob wig, vivid scarlet breeches, laced with gold, and a gray coat, looking "like the Lord Mayor's coachman," or as Jaffier, in "Venice Preserved," with an equally familiar and un-Venetian dress.\*

\* Too much insistence, however, has been laid on this point The eye of the audience, from habit, is not disturbed I confess it seems to me that the discrepancy is less under such conditions than when there is an elaborate and

Tate Wilkinson tells us :

But the gentlemen and ladies in modern-dressed tragedies, forty years ago, at Covent Garden Theatre, wore the old laced clothes which had done many years' service at Lincoln's Inn Fields, besides having graced the original wearers, and the ladies were in large hoops, and the velvet petticoats, heavily embossed, proved extremely inconvenient and troublesome, and always a page behind to hear the lovers' secrets and keep the train in graceful decorum. If two princesses met on the stage, with the frequent stage-crossing then practised, it would now seem truly entertaining to behold a page dangling at the tail of each heroine. I have seen Mrs Woffington dressed in high taste for Mrs Phillis, for then all ladies' companions or gentlewomen's gentlewomen actually appeared in that style of dress; nay, even the comical Clive dressed her chambermaids, lappet, lettice, etc. in the same manner. About twenty years ago there was an old wardrobe I found in the ruins of my theatrical Herculeaneum, and which was of great antiquity, and had appertained to Roman emperors, kings, etc, when not a performer, lady or gentleman of the London theatres, but would have involuntarily laughed at the old broad seams of gold and silver lace, and have cast piteous and contemptuous looks on the country performers thus loaded with tumperry. Yet those despicable clothes had, at different periods of time, bedecked real lords and dukes, and were bought at much less price than now, and would produce, by one day's labour of stripping merely the old materials, 40*l* or 50*l* to provide a supper if the stomach required. An old petticoat, made for a large hoop of the Duchess of Northumberland, thirty years ago, would have served a queen in the theatre several years, then descended to a Duchess of Suffolk, afterwards made two handsome tragedy shapes for an old rich Spaniard. I have now worn occasionally, by comedians, for old characters of wealth, a suit of purple cloth, with gold vellum holes, that I frequently wore when a young man as a fashionable dress, and spoke the prologue to the author, gave tea, etc on the London stage, and after that used it as my common dress to parade the streets at noon. At that time no more than two or three principal characters (at Covent Garden in particular) were well

dressed, and those not with any variety as now Mrs Woffington's wardrobe had only the increase of one tragedy suit in the course of the season, in addition to the clothes allotted to her, unless she indulged herself, and she had a new suit for Sir Harry Wildair.

### Another sketch of Quin's costume

What would our modern beaux think of young Chamont, as I have seen Mr Quin act it at the age of sixty? He was equipped in a long, grisly, half-powdered periwig, hanging low down on each side of the breast and down the back, a heavy scarlet coat and waistcoat trimmed with broad gold lace, black velvet breeches, a black silk neckcloth, black stockings, a pair of square-toed shoes, with an old-fashioned pair of stone buckles, and the youthful, the fiery Chamont adorned himself with a pair of stiff high-topped white gloves, with a broad old scollop-laced hat, which, when taken off the head, and having pressed the old wig, and viewing his fair round belly with fat capon lined, he looked like Sir John Brute in the drunken scene. Old Ryan was the strong and lusty Polydore, with a red face and voice truly horrible, which, like Portia, you might quickly have distinguished "He knows me, as the blind man does the cuckoo, by my bad voice," and by them stood Mr Barry, in "Castalio," in a neat bag wig, then of the newest fashion, in his bloom and prime of life, and was certainly one of the handsomest men ever seen on or off the stage, with Mrs Cibber, all elegance and neatness, by his side as Monimia. The sight of the two ancient heroes of antiquity made such a contrast in the quartetto that it struck even my features at the age of eleven with visibility.

The course of Garrick's management was to be marked by some of the most admirable and lasting contributions to the list of sterling comedies. To these belong "The Suspicious Husband," by Hoadley, Colman's admirable "Jealous Wife," one of the best acting pieces in the language, "The Clandestine Marriage," in which, however, the manager had a share,

Murphy's "The Way to Keep Him," and other comedies. It would be an interesting speculation to trace all that has influenced or shaped English comedy. One would be inclined to lay its foundation to the persistent translation, adaptation, and imitation of Molière, some form of whose humour seems to flavour pieces of this cast. "The School for Scandal," however, reflects the more artificial style of Congreve. During these later days there is no English school of writing. We are helplessly dependent on our neighbours. It may be added that there has always been a taste for tragedy, taking shape as poetical drama, and for long-drawn-out recited plays in blank verse. This has literally obtained from the days of Dryden, and was continued all through last century in such depressing works as "The Fall of Apuleia," "Cleone," "The Siege of Damascus," "Agis," "The Fall of Saguntum," etc., in which who could take interest? The taste was transferred to works of the gloomy German school at the beginning of the present century, "The Stranger," "Pizarro," etc., but was restored again to much favour by Sheridan Knowles and Lord Lytton, and even in our time is maintained in such pieces as "Charles the First" and "Eugene Aram." But this subject, interesting as it is, would need a treatise to itself.

"The Gamester" had been an attempt at the new treatment of a dramatic story, and curiously suggests the introduction of the romantic style in opposition to the classical, introduced a hundred years later by Dumas in Paris. "The Gamester" was written chiefly in prose, and the tone was pitched very low, there being a display of the more vulgar earthly passions of everyday grief and suffering, caused by everyday motives. There was nothing heroic. Hence it resembled "George Barnwell," and though the spectators could hardly control

standards hitherto in favour This opens up a very interesting question whether, after all, this "high-pitched" treatment is not necessary for the stage, to sustain the interest—whether the principle of something unusual and exceptional, both in story and treatment, would not be more in keeping with the conditions of the stage itself than the incidents of ordinary life Such was Johnson's view He thinks a tragedy in prose undramatic; "it is difficult for performers to speak it, that the lowest, when impassioned, raise their language, and that the writing of prose is generally the plea or excuse of poverty of genius." It might be added that the language of agitation is more or less heroic, save of course in the case of the lowest classes.

A view of the stage during the middle of the century offers a spectacle of rude and familiar shifts, but at the same time it is impossible not to see that the deficiency was supplied by the interest in the performers and their acting It seemed as though such surroundings and the illusion was not thought necessary, and it is certain that the acting was finer at the season when scenery was deficient, and *vice versâ*. The right of admission to the stage or behind the scenes, then a privilege of almost any well-dressed person, gave an opening for free-and-easy manners. It, moreover, showed the conspicuous figure made by the individual actor or actress in society On a benefit-night, which was simply a mode of presenting money to a favourite, all attempts at illusion were set aside.

The theatres (says Wilkinson) formerly were not large enough on such occasions, as frequently, on the benefit of a Woodward, a Mrs. Cibber, a Shuter, and others, was the case, therefore the following advertisement appeared at the bottom of each playbill on any benefit of consequence "Part of the pit will be railed into the boxes; and for the better accommodation of the ladies, the stage will be formed into an

amphitheatre, where servants will be allowed to keep places” When a great house was not sufficiently ascertained (as the performer judged) for the places taken and the tickets sold, at the bottom of the bill was “N B —Not any building on the stage” What was termed building on the stage certainly was the greatest nuisance that ever prevailed over an entertainment But, my kind reader, suppose an audience behind the curtain up to the clouds, with persons of a menial cast on the ground, beaux and no beaux crowding the only entrance, what a play it must have been whenever Romeo was breaking open the supposed tomb, which was no more than a screen on those nights set up, and Mrs Cibber prostrating herself on an old couch, covered with black cloth, as the tomb of the Capulets, with at least (on a great benefit-night) two hundred persons behind her, which formed the background. Nay, the stage, which was not thirty years ago near so wide as at present, also the stage-doors (which must be well remembered) and the stage-boxes, before which there were false canvas, inclosed fronts on each side of two or three seats, on to the lamps, for ladies of distinction, which rendered it next to impossible for those ladies in the stage-boxes to see at all, but still it was the fashion, and therefore of course charming and delightful, and whenever a Don Cholerick in “The Fop’s Fortune,” or Sir Amorous Vanwit in “Woman’s a Riddle,” or Charles, in “The Busybody,” tried to find out secrets or plot an escape from a balcony, they always bowed and thrust themselves into the boxes over the stage-door amidst the company, who were greatly disturbed, and obliged to give up their seats.

At Quin’s benefit, in 1753, it was announced. “The part of Falstaff will be performed by Mr. Quin,” which was his last night of performing The stage was at 5s, pit and boxes all joined together at 5s There was only one entrance on each side of the stage, which was always particularly crowded. Affronting the audience was one of the darling delights, particularly offending the galleries, and thereby incurring the displeasure of the gods, who showed their resentment by dispersing golden showers of oranges and half-eaten pippins, to the infinite terror of the ladies of fashion seated

The stage spectators were not content with piling on raised seats, till their heads reached the theatrical cloudings, which seats were closed in with dirty worn-out scenery, to enclose the painting round from the first wing, the main entrance being up steps from the middle of the back scene, but when that amphitheatre was filled, there would be a group of ill-dressed lads and persons sitting on the stage in front, three or four rows deep, otherwise those who sat behind could not have seen, and a riot would have ensued, so, in fact, a performer on a popular night could not step his foot with safety, lest he either should thereby hurt or offend, or be thrown down amongst scores of idle tipsy apprentices

Mr Quin, aged sixty-five, with the heavy dress of Falstaff (notwithstanding the impatience of the audience to see their old acquaintance), was several minutes before he could pass through the numbers that wedged and hemmed him in Mrs. Cibber, arrayed for Juliet, in a full white satin dress, with the then indispensable large hoop, in all her pomp of woe, thus shaken and taken prisoner as it were by foes sarcastic and barbarous !

During the Covent Garden pantomime this abuse was not tolerated, and notice was given "As any obstructions in the movements of the machinery will greatly prejudice the performance of the entertainment, it is hoped that no gentleman will take it amiss the being refused admittance behind the scenes. Ladies are requested to send their servants by three o'clock N B—There will not be any building on the stage"

When Rich, after two or three years' promise and delay, brought forth one of these long-wished-for pantomimes, it was a rage, a madness incredible seized all the Londoners. On such fortunate occurrences Mr Rich was strongly attached and tenderly tenacious of his harlequin jacket being profaned or infringed upon, and kept his holy rites and mysteries of serpents, lions, Druids, etc sacred from the inspection of all curious prying inspectors Nor would he have had his magical sword interrupted, or his fountains and cascades stopped in their munificent flow

One of the remarkable reforms introduced by the good taste of Garrick, almost as soon as he entered on manage-



ment, was the very simple one of producing Shakespeare's "Macbeth" The play, as "prepared" by Davenant, had been only tolerated, being fashioned into a sort of opera, while abundance of "business" was introduced. Lady Macbeth invites her husband to resign his crown

There has been too much blood already spilt  
Make not your subjects victims to your guilt.

MACBETH.

Resign my crown?—and with it both our lives.  
I must have better counsellors.

LADY MACBETH

What your witches?

Curse on your messengers of hell! Their breaths  
Infected first my breath See me no more  
As king your crown sits heavy on your head,  
But heavier on my heart I have had too much  
Of kings already See the ghost again!

The players smiled contemptuously when they heard of the new reading. Even Quin had been said to have asked in astonishment "What! do not I play 'Macbeth' as written by Shakespeare?" And when he heard Garrick declaiming

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon.  
Where got'st thou that goose-look?

he asked him where he had found such strange language. Garrick, however, added "a dying speech" for himself But he had not the courage to reform the dress. Macklin had, however, preceded him in restoring Shakespeare. A very interesting review might be made of the various attempts at fitting Shakespeare, and, in justice to managers, it should be remembered that it is almost impossible to present Shakespeare on the stage without arrangement and alteration of some kind, and until audiences are not educated up to the appreciation of Shakespeare, this course must be followed The managers

of reverence and judgment will proceed much as Mozart did when adding orchestration unknown in Handel's day to the score of the "Messiah." Cibber's Richard certainly deserves praise as a spirited and workmanlike, though irreverent attempt, and it has helped, in its rough way, to carry a taste for the bard into country audiences. The line, "Off with his head, so much for Buckingham!" is still taken by many to be Shakespeare's.

A year later Garrick brought out Johnson's single dramatic effort, well remembered as a comparative failure\*.

Nor was this all that the actor did for his friend. A ponderous and much-laboured tragedy was in Johnson's desk, hopelessly inferior to the prologue, and this was brought out with certain failure. It was certainly no worse than "The Fall of Saguntum," "The Siege of Apuleia," and such things. But we might have hoped better things from Johnson.

Richardson, in an unpublished letter, dated January, 1749, gives a short sketch of the difficulties connected with this play.

As to Mr Garrick, give me leave to say what I know, which is, that he was actually long ago engaged in "Irene." The author was his tutor (Dr Johnson), and it was expected to come on last season. Garrick had also engaged to Mr Lyttleton that no new play should be acted during the run

PROFITS OF "IRENE" FOR NINE NIGHTS

	£	s	d
Third night's receipts	177	1	6
Sixth    "    "	106	4	0
Ninth   "    "	101	11	6
	384	17	0
Charges of the house	189	0	0
Profit.	195	17	0
Copyright	100	0	0
	<u>£295</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>0</u>

of "Coriolanus" There was ill-will between Mr Thomson and Mr Garrick on the score of Mr Quin and of that play, and Mr. Garrick was glad of an opportunity to regain Mr Lyttleton's opinion by such a promise Mr. Millar got me one evening last week to look upon some scenes of "Merope" at his house I took no notice of *having seen it*, but read some parts of it, as new to me, and that before his wife and her sister, two intelligent women

But Johnson, if he failed in this department, to which he was unsuited, had already enriched dramatic literature with the masterly prologue with which Garrick opened his theatre This excellent piece was actually a review of the history of the stage, as well as a prophecy The sonorous music of its opening lines will be welcome here, especially as it is a contribution to the history of the stage

When Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes  
First reared the stage, immortal Shakespeare rose;  
Each change of many-coloured life he drew,  
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new  
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,  
And panting Time toiled after him in vain  
His powerful strokes presiding Truth impressed,  
And unresisted passion stormed the breast

Then Jonson came, instructed from the school  
To please in method and invent by rule,  
His studious patience and laborious art,  
By regular approach essayed the heart  
Cold approbation gave the lingering bays,  
For those who durst not censure scarce could praise.  
A mortal born, he met the general doom,  
But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb

The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,  
Nor wished for Jonson's art, or Shakespeare's flame.  
Themselves they studied, as they felt they wit,  
Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit  
Vice always found a sympathetic friend,  
They pleased their age, and did not aim to mend

## GARRICK AS MANAGER.

Yet bards like these aspired to lasting praise,  
And proudly hoped to pump in future days.  
Their cause was general, their supports were strong;  
Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long,  
Till Shame regained the post that Sense betrayed,  
And Virtue called Oblivion to her aid

Then crushed by rules, and weakened as refined,  
For years the power of tragedy declined,  
From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,  
Till declamation roared, whilst passion slept,  
Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread,  
Philosophy remained, though Nature fled  
But forced at length her ancient reign to quit,  
She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of wit;  
Exulting Folly hailed the joyous day,  
And pantomime and song confirmed her sway  
But who the coming changes can presage,  
And mark the future periods of the stage?  
Perhaps if skill could distant times explore,  
New Behns, new Duifeys, yet remain in store;  
Perhaps where Lear has raved, and Hamlet died,  
On flying cars new sojourners may ride,  
Perhaps (for who can guess the effects of chance?)  
Here Hunt may box, or Mahomet may dance.

Hard is his lot that here by fortune placed,  
Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste,  
With every meteor of caprice must play,  
And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day  
Ah! let not censure term our fate our choice,  
The stage but echoes back the public voice;  
The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,  
For we that live to please must please to live.

Then prompt no more the follies you decry,  
As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die,  
'Tis yours this night to bid the reign commence  
Of rescued Nature and reviving Sense;  
To chase the charms of sound, the pomp of show,  
For useful mirth and salutary woe,  
Bid scenic Virtue from the rising age,  
And Truth diffuse her radiance from the stage.

Johnson's anticipations—which were the manager's also—were very soon to be realised. It was found that the classical drama unsupported did not “pay,” and that Rich's pantomimes were ever a superior attraction. Garrick, a man of business, and thoroughly practical, prepared to favour this taste, though he did not go so far as a modern manager, who professes that anyone conducting a theatre must offer such wares only as the public will buy or desire to buy, the answer to which is that a manager of taste will get the public to buy what he has to sell. Garrick was compelled to turn to shows of various kinds, pantomimes, operas, ballets, etc., and was certainly successful in the former.

About this time we find the veteran Cibber writing a lively and also a desponding letter, the first to his friend Victor, at Dublin. It was natural, indeed, that one of so old and good a school should not relish the new actor's success. He was fond of uttering sarcastic comments on him, which the other took good-humouredly.

The Vale, November 21st, 1749

DEAR SIR,

Mr. Dyer is in Covent Garden house, to whom, at Mrs. Woffington's desire, I twice read the part of Tom in “The Conscious Lovers.” He acquitted himself with a good deal of natural spirit, and in that style promises to be a very useful actor. His singing, too, gave a good deal of surprise and pleasure. As to our four theatres, which are but sparingly adorned with the wonderful, their state is thus. 1. Drury Lane and Garrick bear the bell. 2. Rich lives, but seldom runs over. 3. The French theatre is tolerably French, but the French plays I never had any great opinion of. Their comedies want humour, and their tragedies credible nature, that is, they are heavily romantic. There was a monstrous tumult of mob the first night, which seemed to threaten a total demolition, but the young men of quality, who did not choose to be interrupted in any diversion that had the royal licence, broke their

heads, kicked, cuffed, and turned them in a lump out of the house. They have acted three times since in the utmost tranquillity, and with more applause than probably they would have met with had they at first set out with their naked merit. 4 The Italian burletta (which is not so well performed as last year) had but a poor house the first day, and, I believe, like a sickly plant, will die before it takes any great root among us. When does the next volume of our poor devil's memoirs come out? and what is become of her? I don't know how it is with you, but I am tired, though still as usual,

Your Friend and humble Servant,

COLLEY CIBBER.

Of a more pathetic interest is the letter written when the veteran play-writer and comedian fancied the end was not far off. It is dated December 25th, 1750

Though Death (he writes) has been cooling his heels at my door these three weeks, I have not had time to see him. The daily conversation of my friends have kept me so agreeably alive, that I have not passed my time better a great while. If you have a mind to make one among us, I will order Death to come another day. To be serious, I long to see you, and hope you will take the first opportunity. And so, with as merry a Christmas and as many New Years as your heart can hope for, I am,

Your real Friend and Servant,

C. CIBBER.

After a number of years, passed in the utmost ease, gaiety, and good-humour, he departed this life, at Islington

For his son Theo a less peaceful ending was in store. His turbulent miserable life had, as we have seen, culminated in disgrace, and having taken an action for damages against the person who had taken away his wife, and laying his damages at 5000*l*, he only received 10*l*, by which the discredit of his own behaviour was marked. This was virtually his ruin. He is thus made to describe his sufferings in the supposed "Apology":

This actor returned to his employment to do his duty, and get his livelihood at the theatre. The night came on he was

to appear, and tho' it had been bruited about the town that there was a very virtuous party form'd to drive him off the stage, he paid little regard to this rumour, conscious of his innocence. But the poor devil found himself mistaken. The house was very early crowded, and the harmonious discordant conceit of catcalls, whistles, etc etc began to play before the curtain drew up. Well, though the actors were all frighten'd, the play began with calmness and applause, but this was only a prelude to the battle when the scene came in which he was to appear, there was a dead silence till he popp'd his poor head from behind the scenes. Then at once the hurley-builey began, volleys of apples and potatoes, and such vile trash, flew about his ears. He retired, the storm subsided, he advanced, it began again. In the most humble gesture and address he made a motion to be heard, it was all in vain, and he was once more pelted off. But what can describe, in those dreadful moments, the anguish of his heart? Who can conceive the various agitations of his soul? Grief, rage, resentment, horror, despair, mix'd with resolution, were all at once fermenting in his bosom, but determin'd to go through the play, he went through it amidst the greatest uproar that ever was heard so long a space in a theatre. This could be borne, and he knew it would die away of itself. But on a trial in relation to his wife's infamy, something gave offence to a noble colonel in the army, who, to revenge a suppos'd affront, rais'd a posse against the actor, and from the boxes began a new attack, and were determin'd he should appear no more on the stage till he had given the gentleman satisfaction by making a publick recantation. All attempts were made to get over this, some of the royal family came, but their presence was not thought of sanction enough to curb the insolence of some people, and an obscure thing of an actor performing his part. He was at last forc'd, out of prudential reasons, not from any conviction of his error, to give the colonel the satisfaction of a publick recantation, and so that affair dropp'd.

To this unhappy life there was to be a most tragic termination. Sheridan, making one final struggle to restore his bankrupt theatre in Dublin, had engaged him together with a

number of others, including Maddox, "the celebrated wire-dancer" These persons, with all the apparatus for a new pantomime, were embarked. They were shipwrecked in some terrible gales on the Scotch coast; a few were saved, but all the professionals were lost, and a box containing the luckless Theo's papers drifted ashore. This took place the year after his father's death His wife survived till the year 1766, being buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, those being the days of careless and highly tolerant deans. One who knew her thus describes her "Her person was perfectly elegant; for although she somewhat declined beyond the bloom of youth, and even wanted that *embonpoint* which sometimes is assistant in concealing the impression made by the hand of Time, yet there was so complete a symmetry and proportion in the different parts which constituted this lady's form, that it was impossible to view her figure and not think her young, or look in her face and not consider her handsome. Her voice was beyond conception plaintive and musical, yet far from deficient in powers for the expression of resentment or disdain, and with the most equal command of feature for the representation of pity or rage, of complacence or disdain "

It should be here noted what a command of discriminating terms the critic then possessed It would be a matter nowadays of the nicest art to analyse, in judicious fitting language—so as to give an idea to those who had never seen the person—the numerous and special charms of Miss Terry's acting

Her health was so precarious, and she was so subject to frequent relapses, that the newspapers ranked her amongst the dead near three months sooner than her decease. About a month before her death the King commanded the comedy of "The Provoked Wife." She was then indisposed, but was supposed to be recovering some degree of health, nothing could prevent her paying her duty to the King and Queen by playing the part of Lady Brute The acting this part when



her health was so infirm, some people believed to be the cause of her death, but the truth is, she had been strongly pressed to bathe in sea-water, to which she had a most fixed aversion; however, she complied with the advice of a very eminent and skilful physician, and that compliance precipitated her death. She died the 30th of January, 1766. A gentleman, who was in company with Mr Garrick when the news of her death was brought, heard him pronounce her eulogium in the following words "Then tragedy expired with her, and yet she was the greatest female plague belonging to my house. I could easily parry the artless thrusts and despise the coarse language of some of my other heroines, but whatever was Cibber's object, a new part or a new dress, she was always sure to carry her point by the acuteness of her invective and the steadiness of her perseverance." Indeed, she most commonly used to be dressed in man's clothes even in private life, the reason of which she affects to make a mystery of.

Nor did this disastrous *finale* exhaust the misfortune of the family. Colley Cibber had also a daughter, Charlotte, who married one Charke. This woman entered on a course of strange adventures, living all her life from "hand to mouth," trying the stage, hack-writing, and at last writing a novel, finishing her course, like Mrs Bellamy, Mrs Baddeley, and so many others, in absolute squalor. "She was," says Dibdin "a sort of English D'Eon, amused herself in fencing, shooting, riding races, currying horses, digging in gardens, and playing upon the fiddle, was at different times an actress, a grocer, an alehouse-keeper, a *valet de chambre*, a sausage seller, and a puppet-show woman, one day in affluence, the next in indigence, now confined in a sponging-house, presently released by a subscription of prostitutes."

The odd course of her life was thus described :

In this employment she continued till, through the recommendation of her brother, she was received into the family of a certain nobleman, in the character of a *valet de chambre*, or gentleman. In this situation she describes herself as being very

happy, till some friends of his lordship remarking an impropriety in the entertaining one of her sex in that character, she was again discharged. Her next employment was the making and selling of sausages for the support of herself and child. But this failing, she became a waiter at the King's Head tavern, Marylebone, commenced afterwards manager of a strolling company of players, and passed through several trivial adventures, but most of them distressful ones, till at length, by the assistance of an uncle, she was enabled to open a public-house, the situation of which she imprudently fixed in Drury Lane. She was soon forced to shut up her house and dispose of all her effects. Her next engagement was with the celebrated Mr Russel, the puppet-show man, by whom, she tells us, she was employed, at a guinea per day, to move his figures during his exhibition at Hickford's Great Room in Brewer Street. She afterwards kept a public-house at Islington, and was doomed to fall still lower.

But Samuel Whyte, the Dublin schoolmaster, gives a sketch of her in the last stage of degradation

About the year 1755, she had written a novel for the press, which I accompanied my friend, a bookseller, to hear read. She was at that time a widow. Her habitation a wretched thatched hovel, situated on the road to Islington, not very distant from the New River-head, where, at that time, it was customary for scavengers to deposit the sweepings of the streets. The night preceding a heavy rain had fallen, which rendered this extraordinary seat of the Muses nearly inaccessible, and we could only approach by wading almost knee-deep in the mud. We did not attempt to pull the latch-string, but knocked at the door, which was opened by a tall, meagre, ragged figure, with a blue apron, indicating, what otherwise was doubtful, that it was a female before us. To the right we perceived the mistress of the house, sitting on a broken chair, under the mantelpiece, by a small fire. At the authoress' feet, on the flounce of her dingy petticoat, reclined a dog, almost a skeleton. The tone of her voice was not harsh, it had something in it humble and disconsolate, a mingled effort of authority and pleasure. Poor soul! A

magpie was perched upon the top ring of her chair, and on her lap was placed a pair of mutilated bellows—the pipe was gone. These were used as a succedaneum for a writing-desk, on which lay displayed her hopes and treasure—the manuscript of her novel, her inkstand was a broken tea-cup, her pen was worn to a stump; a rough deal board, with three hobbling supporters, was brought for our convenience, on which, without further ceremony, we contrived to sit down and enter upon business. The work was read, remarks made, alterations suggested, and agreed to, and thirty guineas demanded for the copy. *The squalid handmaiden, who had been an attentive listener, stretched forward her tawny neck, with an eye of anxious expectation.* The bookseller offered five guineas, our authoress did not appear hurt, disappointments had rendered her mind callous, however, some altercation ensued, which terminated by the bookseller doubling his first proposal, which was accepted.

The history of the stage is full of such strange alternations

## CHAPTER II.

### CHURCHILL AND "THE ROSCIAD."

GARRICK lived in a cloud of pamphlets. At every step he took he was assailed in the press by the scribblers whom he had offended. Any actor who had a dispute with a manager, or a brother-actor, or a critic, put his case before the public in a pamphlet. The performers and their affairs became, therefore, of special interest to the public, and there was as much curiosity in following their proceedings off the stage as upon it. As has been shown, their constant intercourse with their friends and admirers at coffee-houses, and the factions which supported them in their quarrels, took away that sacred privacy which, as Hazlitt later contended, was a positive element in stage illusion. One result of this was the production of a famous satire which has become a classic, and has outlived the occasion which produced it.

Churchill, a depraved clergyman of brilliant powers, who was eager to make his talents for satire known, seems to have rather capriciously selected the actors as offering the best subject, and as likely to bring him into the most publicity. For two months he attended the theatres regularly, making his notes and sketches, and in March, 1761, he became famous by publishing "The Rosciad." His pencil, however, had been chiefly employed in drawing blemishes, for his praises seem

general enough. It caused a prodigious sensation, and no wonder, for the portraits are the most spirited and finished that can be conceived. A few are selected as bringing the style of acting then in vogue before the reader

Mossop, attach'd to military plan,  
Still kept his eye fix'd on his right-hand man,  
Whilst the mouth measures words with seeming skill,  
The right hand labours, and the left lies still,  
With studied impropriety of speech,  
He soars beyond the hackney critic's reach,  
*To epithets allots emphatic state,*  
Whilst principals, ungraced, like lackeys wait,  
Conjunction, preposition, adverb join  
To stamp new vigour on the nervous line,  
In monosyllables his thunders roll,  
*He, she, it, and we, ye, they, fright the soul*

In person taller than the common size,  
Behold where BARRY draws admiring eyes!  
When labouring passions, in his bosom pent,  
Convulsive rage, and struggling heave for vent,  
Spectators, with imagined terroirs warm,  
Anxious expect the bursting of the storm,  
But, all unfit in such a pile to dwell,  
His voice comes forth, like Echo from her cell  
Who else can speak so very, very fine,  
That sense may kindly end with every line?

Some dozen lines before the ghost is there,  
Behold him for the solemn scene prepare,  
See how he frames his eyes, poises each limb,  
Puts the whole body into proper trim;  
From whence we learn, with no great stretch of art,  
Five lines hence comes a ghost, and, ha! a start.

(QUIN) Fix'd in one frame of features, glare of eye,  
Passions, like chaos, in confusion lie,  
In vain the wonders of his skill are tried  
To form distinctions Nature hath denied.  
His voice no touch of harmony admits,  
Irregularly deep, and shrill by fits.

The two extremes appear like man and wife,  
Coupled together for the sake of strife

His action's always strong, but sometimes such,  
That candour must declare he acts too much  
Why must impatience fall three paces back ?  
Why paces three return to the attack ?  
Why is the right leg, too, forbid to stir,  
Unless in motion semicircular ?

Why must the hero with the Nailor vie,  
And hurl the close-clench'd fist at nose or eye ?

(CLIVE) First giggling, plotting chambermaids arrive,  
Hoydens and romps, led on by General Clive.

In spite of outward blemishes, she shone,  
For humour famed, and humour all her own ;  
Easy, as if at home, the stage she trod,  
Nor sought the critic's praise, nor feared his rod ,  
Original in spirit and in ease,

She pleased by hiding all attempts to please ;  
MACKLIN, who largely deals in half-form'd sounds,

Who wantonly transgresses Nature's bounds,  
Whose acting's hard, affected, and constrain'd,  
*Whose features, as each other they disdain'd,*

At variance set, inflexible and coarse,  
Ne'er know the workings of united force.

SHUTER, who never cared a single pin

Whether he left out nonsense, or put in

SPARKS at his glass sat comfortably down

To separate frown from smile, and smile from frown

SMITH, the genteel, the airy, and the smart,

Smith was just gone to school to say his part

Ross (a misfortune which we often meet)

Was fast asleep at dear STATIRA's feet ,

Statira, with her hero to agree,

Stood on her feet as fast asleep as he.

Lo, YATES ! Without the least finesse of art

He gets applause—I wish he'd get his part

When hot impatience is in full career,

How vilely "Hark ye ! hark ye !" grates the ear ,

When active fancy from the brain is sent,

And stands on tip-toe for some wish'd event

I hate those careless blunders, which recall  
 Suspended sense, and prove it fiction all.  
 When, to please himself or charm his wife,  
 He aims at something in politer life,  
 When, blindly thwarting Nature's stubborn plan,  
 He treads the stage by way of gentleman,  
 The clown, who no one touch of breeding knows,  
 Looks like Tom Errand dress'd in Clincher's clothes.  
 Fond of his dress, fond of his person grown,  
 Laugh'd at by all, and to himself unknown,  
 From side to side he struts, he smiles, he prates,  
 And seems to wonder what's become of Yates.\*

(MRS YATES.) What rival should with her dispute her claim?

But justice may not partial trophies raise,  
 Nor sink the actress in the woman's praise  
 Still hand in hand her words and actions go,  
 And the heart feels more than the features show,  
 For, through the regions of that beauteous face  
 We no variety of passions trace;  
 Dead to the soft emotions of the heart,  
 No kindred softness can those eyes impart  
 The brow, still fix'd in sorrow's sullen flame,  
 Void of distinction, marks all parts the same  
 What's a fine person, or a beauteous face,  
 Unless deportment gives them decent grace?

(MRS PRITCHARD—in comedy ) Nay, there, cries critic, hold,

Pritchard's for comedy too fat and old

Who can, with patience, bear the gray coquette,  
 Or force a laugh with overgrown Juliet?

Her speech, look, action, humour, all are just,  
 But then, her age and figure give disgust

Are foibles, then, and graces of the mind,  
 In real life, to size or age confined?

Do spirits flow, and is good-breeding placed  
 In any set circumference of waist?

As we grow old, doth affectation cease,  
 Or gives not age new vigour to caprice?

\* Yates was so stung by this bitter sketch, that he purposed "thrashing" the author, but when he met him was intimidated. Davies, who was described mouthing his words "as curs mouth a bone," was actually driven from the

These short extracts show the bold touch and masterly drawing of the artist. Garrick and an obscure actress named Bride were extravagantly praised, the latter, no doubt, more from partiality than principle. The bitter satirist is often thus prejudiced. Nothing has ever appeared since to compare with "The Rosciad." It adds life to the figures. Long after, an Irish satirist essayed to bend the same bow, in the well-known "Familiar Epistles"—but here was all the malice without the power. The example, however, was sure to stimulate smaller fry—the Murphys, Lloyds, Antony Pasquins, and the rest.

I have mentioned a name, one of those clever adventurers which the stage has fostered, and whose talent it has, indeed, almost engendered—the race of men who, like Churchill, frequented the coffee-houses and, living on their wits, contributed so handsomely to the credit of the English stage. The line of sterling dramatists were mostly what might be styled adventurers, but nearly all were figures of mark. Goldsmith, Colman, Reynolds, Sheridan, Holcroft, Foote, Arthur Murphy, Ben Hoadley—what a strange fitful career each offered! Murphy came up to town an Irish student, frequenting the coffee-houses, not without influential connections, who wished to provide for him in the colonies. In a little fragment he tells his own story

In July, 1744, when seventeen, I arrived at my mother's in York Buildings. My eldest brother James soon came home from his morning walk, and embraced me with great affection. In a day or two after, my uncle Jeffery French, then Member of Parliament for Milbourn Port, came to see me. He talked with me for some time about indifferent things, and then, repeating a line from Virgil, asked me if I could construe it? I told him I had the whole *Æneid* by heart. He made me repeat ten or a dozen lines, and then said "If I have fifty acres of land to plough, and can only get two labouring men to work at two acres per day, how many days will it take to do



the whole?" "Sir!" said I, staring at him "Can't you answer that question?" said he, "then I would not give a farthing for all you know Get Cocker's Arithmetic, you may buy it for a shilling at any stall, and mind me, young man, did you ever hear Mass while you was abroad?" "Sir, I did, like the rest of the boys" "Then, mark my words let me never hear that you go to Mass again, it is a mean, beggarly, blackguard religion" He then rose, stepped into his chariot, and drove away My mother desired me not to mind his violent advice, but my brother, who was educated at Westminster school, spoke strongly in support of my uncle's opinion, and he never gave up the point till he succeeded to his utmost wish

The playhouses at that time had great attractions. Qum, at Covent Garden, and Garrick, at Drury Lane, drew crowded houses There were besides, Mis Cibber, Mrs Pritchard, Mrs Clive, and that excellent comedian Harry Woodward London at that time had many advantages, which have been long since lost. There were a number of coffee-houses where the town wits met every evening, particularly the Bedford, in the Piazza, Covent Garden, and George's, at Temple Bar Young as I was, I made my way to those places, and there, among the famous geniuses of the time, I saw Samuel Foote and Doctor Barrowby, who was a celebrated wit of that day Foote, at a table in the doctor's company, drew out his watch with great parade, and then said, "My watch does not go" "It will go," said Dr Barrowby, and Foote was abashed by a loud laugh.

Another well-known person at that time, namely, the famous Doctor Hill, author of a daily paper called *The Inspector*, was a constant visitor at the Bedford The doctor's essays were weak and frivolous to such a degree, that, though then *not two-and-twenty*, I flattered myself that I could overtop Dr. Hill. I passed a few weeks in making preparations, and on Saturday, October 21st, 1752, most boldly and vainly published the first number of *The Gray's Inn Journal*.

His uncle Mr. French died without leaving him anything

"This to me was a terrible disappointment, the more so as I

sufficient to overwhelm me. The late Samuel Foote was, at that time, my intimate friend and chief adviser he bade me do as he had done, and go on the stage I approved his advice, so far as to let it be given out that I intended to pursue that scheme, in hopes that my relations, who by my mother's side were rich and numerous, would take some step to prevent what I imagined they would think a disgrace to themselves. I heard nothing from any of them, they all seemed indifferent about me, and therefore I concluded *The Gray's Inn Journal* on the 21st of September, 1754, and in a short time afterwards appeared at Covent Garden in the character of Othello

"In the course of that season I contrived, with economy, to clear off a considerable part of my debts Mr. David Garrick engaged me for the following year at Drury Lane, when, including salary, profits of the farce called "The Apprentice," and a generous support of my friends on my benefit-night, I cleared within a trifle of 800*l*. I had now, after paying off all my debts, about 400*l*. in my pocket, and with that sum I determined to quit the dramatic line, this was in the summer of 1756

"In the beginning of 1757, I offered to enter myself a student of the Middle Temple, but the Benchers of that Society thought fit to object to me, assigning as their reason that I had appeared in the profession of an actor This kindled in my breast a degree of indignation, and I was free enough to speak my mind on the occasion I was obliged, however, to sit down under the affront"

As Mr Murphy grew old he hung about the remains of the old society in which he had once flourished. He was in comfortable circumstances, enjoying a pension and a commissionership Mr. Rogers used to tell a characteristic story of

his closing days. The old man would be asked: "Well, sir, you knew Mr. Garrick, now of what kind was his acting?" With great deliberation "I'll tell you, sir, no man knew him so well" There was a general expectancy. "Off the stage he was a mean pitiful hound, but on the stage—oh, my great God!" His description did not go beyond this, and never varied. When Mrs. Piozzi sold off the Streatham portraits, his was the only one she kept. He had a house on Hammersmith Mall, and a few days before his death, and when scarcely himself, he was surprised leaving the house to go down to "the Percy coffee-house." This was characteristic.

Nor can a most remarkable character, that also figured at the taverns, be passed over, namely, Dr. Hill, the quack doctor, actor, bookmaker, herbalist, play-writer, novelist, and controversialist. The works of this man would fill a library, and a detailed account of his career would be most entertaining. He was perpetually in "hot water" as it is called, insulting actors from the boxes and wangling with scientific men. His controversies were conducted in—quartos! Garrick, however, extinguished him in what is certainly one of the happiest epigrams recorded (a piece of the doctor's had failed), declaring that

For physic and farces  
His equal there scarce is.  
His farces are physic,  
His physic a farce is.

The amazing part of the whole is that his vast works, set out in folios and richly illustrated, have an air of learning and research, and are really not unentertaining. How he obtained booksellers to undertake such costly ventures is also a marvel. He called himself, and was called by others, "Sir John Hill,"

this singular being would form one of the most extraordinary stories in illustration of an adventurer's course that could be conceived

At the close of the first two seasons at Drury Lane, under the new managers, we find that their profits amounted to a sum of 15,558*l* 15*s.* 2½*d*, or at the rate of nearly 8000*l* a year each.\* The salaries, however, and expenses were comparatively low.

\* Mr Bunn furnishes these figures from the old books of the theatre before him.

## CHAPTER III.

### SCENES BEHIND THE SCENES

WHEN Garrick was in Dublin, a young actor, tall and with a fine melodious voice, had made a deep impression on the city. This was "Spranger Barry," the son of a silversmith. He seems to have been more interesting than the greater actor Garrick had aided him in procuring a London engagement, and he was soon induced, by flatteries and partisanship, to set up as a rival. Then followed the well-known "Romeo and Juliet" contest, which was not unacceptable to both houses in bringing profit. He derived much assistance from the lady who always acted with him, Mrs. Dancer, who later became Mrs. Barry, and later Mrs. Crawford\*.

There is something interesting in Barry's career, his captivating talents contrasting with his careless combative Irish temper. Few enjoyed such a reputation, but within a few years after his death he was scarcely known or recollected.

The gift of an enchanting voice is, and ever will be, an irresistible charm on the stage, and an actor able to modulate his voice and his cadences has an extraordinary advantage. He

This last unprovident marriage was to a man much younger than herself, who wasted all her hard earnings. Grown old, "with the appearance of an old man," her voice harsh and broken, she was sent for almost in her decay to oppose Mrs. Siddons, but failed. She lived until 1801.

might have flourished, but for insane building of a theatre which brought ruin, then decay from gout, a struggle to vanquish infirmity maintained on the very stage, but which gradually overcame him. It is recorded that he and his attractive wife received, in 1774, a salary of 1700*l* for a season. After a few years of success he became gradually a victim to gout, which seized on him and ended his playing. In addition to which, he and his wife were to give endless trouble and vexation to Garrick and those who engaged them, owing to their airs and affectations. In a little MS note-book, Cross, the prompter—a worthy and excellent officer, and long associated with Drury Lane—has left a short but minute record of his troubles with the clever but fantastic pair. This affair occurred in 1769.

In the September wrote (the little memorandum runs) to the Barrys to know whether they could act a week later. They answered, saying "That the soonest they could appear would be the latter end of next week." The "Fair Penitent" was advertised for Wednesday, the 11th. A rehearsal was called on Thursday, the 10th. About nine o'clock in the morning Mr Barry sent for me, and told me he was so ill it was impossible for him to play for some time, and that he would give up his salary, etc. On the 12th, a rehearsal of "As You Like It," called at Mrs Barry's desire. At ten she sent word to have it put off for half an hour. The performers stayed for her till half-past eleven, but she not coming, they went away. On the 14th she was asked if she would play Lady Townley with Mr Reddish. She said, "She had no clothes for it." I asked if she had any objection to Mrs Abington's playing the part. She said "No." They had, however, walked in "The Pageant." But on Saturday, 21st, Mrs Barry sent word she was so ill she could not come out for "The Pageant," if she did she could not play the Mourning Bride on Monday. I waited on her, by the manager's order, and told her they would excuse her playing on Monday if she would come out and do her part in "The Pageant." As it was a thing of great consequence to them, they desired and expected, as she had begun it, she would con-

tinue it as long as she was able Her answer was, that as they seemed to think it of such consequence, she would come out and do it to-night and Monday, but after that desired to be excused from it On Monday, Mr Barry sent a note that Mrs Barry was ill in her bed and could not come out till she was better. When a rehearsal began, a note arrived that she could not come I also on Friday delivered a message to Mrs Barry from Mr Garrick, that "He would never ask her to play in anything in which he was particularly interested" Her answer was, "That he was in his rage, but that, if his mind should alter, she was ready and willing to do anything he would desire her to do"

Illness and suffering was no doubt accountable for much of this In his later stages he could with difficulty drag himself through his part Once, when in this state, he said in "Lear" that he was old and infirm, the sentiment was greeted with a scoffing laugh Wrote one who witnessed his last performance

On his last appearance, in 1776, he was so infirm that before the curtain rose it was thought he could not support himself through the play, but in spite of decay he played Jaffier with such a glow of love and tenderness, and such a heroic passion, as thrilled the theatre, and spread even to the actors on the stage with him, though he was almost insensible when, after the fall of the curtain, he was led back to the green-room. There was, we are told, in Barry's whole person such a noble air of command, such elegance in his action, such regularity and expressiveness in his features, in his voice such resources of melody, strength, and tenderness, that the greatest Parliamentary orators used to study his acting for the charm of his stately grace and the secret of its pathos

His wife, who in her day was a grand actress, is perhaps better known from being arbitrarily associated with one of the prettiest stories extant—a gem in story telling, for it is told by Charles Lamb, in "Barbara S——." Of this he pleasantly makes Mrs Crawford the heroine.

At the period I commenced with, her slender earnings were the sole support of the family, including two younger sisters. I must throw a veil over some mortifying circumstances. Enough to say, that her Saturday's pittance was the only chance of a Sunday's (generally their only) meal of meat. One thing I will only mention, that in some child's part, where in her theatrical character she was to sup off a roast fowl (oh joy to Barbara!) some comic actor, who was for the night caterer for this dainty—in the misguided humour of his part, threw over the dish such a quantity of salt (oh, grief and pain of heart to Barbara!), that when he crammed a portion of it into her mouth she was obliged sputteringly to reject it; and what with shame of her ill-acted part and pain of real appetite at missing such a dainty, her little heart sobbed almost to breaking, till a flood of tears, which the well-fed spectators were totally unable to comprehend, mercifully relieved her. This was the little starved, meritorious maid, who stood before old Ravenscroft, the treasurer, for her Saturday's payment. Ravenscroft was a man, I have heard many old theatrical people besides herself say, of all men least calculated for a treasurer. He had no head for accounts, paid away at random, kept scarce any books, and summing up at the week's end, if he found himself a pound or so deficient, blest himself that it was no worse. Now Barbara's weekly stipend was a bare half guinea. By mistake he popped into her hand a whole one. Barbara tripped away. She was entirely unconscious at first of the mistake, God knows, Ravenscroft would never have discovered it. But when she had got down to the first of those uncouth landing-places, she became sensible of an unusual weight of metal pressing her little hand. Now mark the dilemma. Her first impulse was to go back to the old treasurer and explain to him his blunder. He was already so confused with age, besides a natural want of punctuality, that she would have had some difficulty in making him understand it. She saw that in an instant. And then it was such a bit of money! and then the image of a larger allowance of butcher's meat on their table next day came across her, till her little eyes glistened and her mouth moistened. But then Mr. Ravenscroft had always been so good-natured, had stood her friend behind the scenes, and even recommended her pro-



motion to some of her little parts But again the old man was reputed to be worth a world of money. He was supposed to have 50*l* a year clear of the theatre. And then came staring upon her the figures of her little stockingless and shoeless sisters In these thoughts she reached the second landing-place—the second, I mean from the top—for there was still another left to traverse Now virtue support Barbara! And that never-failing friend did step in—for at that moment a strength not her own, I have heard her say, was revealed to her—a reason above reasoning—and without her own agency, as it seemed (for she never felt her feet to move), she found herself transported back to the individual desk she had just quitted, and her hand in the old hand of Ravenscroft, who in silence took back the refunded treasure, and who had been sitting (good man) insensible to the lapse of minutes, which to her were anxious ages, and from that moment a deep peace fell upon her heart, and she knew the quality of honesty A year or two's unrepining application to her profession brightened up the feet and the prospects of her little sisters, set the whole family upon their legs again, and released her from the difficulty of discussing moral dogmas upon a landing-place I have heard her say, that it was a surprise, not much short of mortification to her, to see the coolness with which the old man pocketed the difference, which had caused her such mortal throes. This anecdote of herself I had in the year 1800, from the mouth of the late Mrs Crawford, then sixty-seven years of age

Lamb heard this story from Miss Kelly, and acknowledged to his friends that he intended her to be the heroine. So late as the year 1775, she herself related to Mr Charles Kent, in a pleasant gossip, the facts of the case Peake was the treasurer, and the theatre Drury Lane

One of the old-established customs that has passed away within living memory was that of "half-price to the theatres." There can be no doubt that this was an equitable practice in the large theatres and under the patent limitations, for as the choice of entertainment was thus restrained, and there were but two or

three houses, it was deemed fair that the audience should be allowed to select what portion of the entertainment it should attend. The performance, too, began very early, and was so arranged as to be, as it were, in two divisions, each of which might suit a different class of spectators. The farce in those days was not the sketchy imperfect thing it is now, but a feature of the night, and worth the reduced rather than half price that was paid for it. Now the theatres, if there be anything popular, fill up at the beginning of the night, the performance begins late, and only an hour before the time of the old half-price.

It was in the year 1763 that an attempt was made by both houses to suspend half-price. During new pieces, on benefit-night, and the production of new plays, full price was always exacted. Garrick had had a quarrel with an Irish gentleman about town, who had given him much annoyance during his performances, and whom he had ridiculed in an ephemeral poem. This comparatively obscure person had the misfortune to offend Churchill, and was by him introduced to posterity in some of the most scathing lines ever written—excellent pendant indeed to Pope's "Atticus"

With that low cunning, which in fools supplies,  
And amply too, the place of being wise,  
Which Nature, kind, indulgent parent, gave  
To qualify the blockhead for a knave,  
With that smooth falsehood, whose appearance charms,  
And Reason of each wholesome doubt disarms,  
Which to the lowest depths of guile descends,  
By vilest means pursues the vilest ends,  
Wears Friendship's mask for purposes of spite,  
Fawns in the day, and butchers in the night;  
*With that malignant envy which turns pale,*  
*And sickens, even if a friend prevail,*  
Which merit and success pursues with hate,  
And damns the worth it cannot imitate;

With the cold caution of a coward's spleen,  
 Which fears not guilt, but always seeks a screen ;  
 With that dull, rooted, callous impudence,  
 Which, dead to shame and every nicer sense,  
 Ne'er blush'd, unless, in spreading Vice's snares,  
 She blunder'd on some virtue unawares ,  
 A motley figure of the Fribble tribe,  
 Which heart can scarce conceive, or pen describe,  
 Came simpering on—to ascertain whose sex  
 Twelve sage impannell'd matrons would perplex.  
 Nor male, nor female ; neither, and yet both ;  
 Of neuter gender, though of Irish growth.

Notwithstanding this public "gibbeting," we find him conspicuous in creating a disturbance. This gentleman became the ringleader in his opposition to the new plan, and was heartily supported, and encouraged, by another Irish gentleman, one destined later to become a man of great mark. This was no less a personage than Mr. Francis, now accepted as the author of "Junius." Among his papers was found a printed handbill, dated January 25th, 1763, addressed to the frequenters of the theatres. It exhorts the public to a stout resistance of the "innovation," and concludes that "one way only is left to us to obtain redress, which is to assemble at the playhouses and demand, with decency and temper, an explanation on this grievance, which I am certain cannot be supported, and owes its establishment to an opinion that every imposition, not openly opposed, acquires the sanction of prescription." This manifesto is signed "An Enemy to Imposition."

It seems incredible what wanton destruction of property has marked the course of theatrical riots ; but perhaps nothing so destructive is recorded as the wrecking of two theatres on so frivolous a pretext. The night chosen was one for the benefit of Mr. Victor, who had altered "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," and it was now to be played for his benefit.

Mr Fitzpatrick harangued the spectators from the boxes, and set forth, in very warm and opprobrious language, the impositions of the managers, and, with much vehemence, pleaded the right of the audience to fix the price of their bill of fare. When Mr. Garrick came forward to address the house, he was received with noise and uproar, and treated with the utmost contempt by the orator and his friends. He was not permitted to show the progressive accumulation of theatrical expenses, the nightly charge of which from the year 1702 to 1760 had been raised from 34*l* to above 90*l*. It had been an invariable custom with Booth, Wilks, and Cibber to demand full prices on the acting of a new play, which had cost them additional expense in decoration. I am informed, too, that the present managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, from the prodigious increase of expenditure on various occasions, are obliged to charge their actors for a benefit play 100*l*.

But this tribune of the people, Mr Fitzpatrick, would hear no apology—they must not be allowed a night's time—no, not an hour—to deliberate. The consequence of not instantly giving up the privileges of authors to the superior claims of dumb show was the tearing up the benches, breaking the lustres and girandoles, and committing every act of violence to which they were prompted by their ungovernable rage and malice. The play was given up and the money returned.

The next night a new tragedy, called "*Elvira*," written by Mr Mallet, was acted. The rioters, headed by their spokesman, enforced their former demand in the same violent and laconic manner. When Mr Garrick appeared, they cried out with one voice "Will you, or will you not, give admittance for half-price after the third act of a play, except during the first winter a pantomime is performed?" The manager, who had learnt the lesson of obedience by the losses which he had sustained the preceding evening, replied in the affirmative. But, however, peace was not to be restored till some of the players had made an *amende honorable* for daring to espouse the cause of their master. Mr Moody was called upon to apologise for the offence he had given, in stopping a madman's hand who was going to set fire to the playhouse. He, imagining that he should bring the audience into good humour by a laughable absurdity, in the tone and language of a low-bred Irishman, said

he was very sorry that he had displeased them by saving their lives in putting out the fire. The speech was so ill taken that it rather inflamed than cooled their rage, and they loudly and vehemently insisted that he should go down on his knees and ask their pardon. Moody was so far from complying with this positive command, that he had the courage absolutely to refuse, saying "I will not, by G——." When he came off the stage, Mr. Garrick was so pleased with his behaviour that he received him with open arms, and assured him that whilst he was master of a guinea he should be paid his income. However, Garrick promised he should not appear on the stage again during the time he was under their displeasure. Mr. Moody's situation was by no means eligible, he was reduced to the necessity of either taking leave of the capital, and joining the itinerant actors in the country, or of depending upon the generosity of the manager. He was therefore determined, after weighing all consequences, to seek redress from the original plotter of all the mischief, Mr. Fitzpatrick himself. He waited upon him at his chambers in the Temple. That gentleman seemed somewhat surprised when Moody addressed him in these words. "I suppose, sir, you know me." Fitzpatrick "Very well, sir, and how came I by the honour of this visit?" After some bold speeches from Moody, the other was cowed. Mr. Fitzpatrick, perceiving that Moody was determined to exact satisfaction, asked him what reparation he wished to have. Moody said, he expected that he would sign his name to a paper, and repair the injury by acknowledging that he had acted towards him in a most unjust and improper manner, at the same time that he would request his friends not to insist on the penance prescribed to Mr. Moody, but to receive him to favour on his making any reasonable excuse. Mr. Fitzpatrick now assumed the man. He declared that no power on earth should prevail on him to sign such a writing. Mr. Moody then renewed his positive resolution to right himself. After some further altercation, Mr. Fitzpatrick proposed to serve Mr. Moody in another way, and perhaps more effectually than the signing of any instrument whatsoever. "I know Mr. Moody," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, "goes to the Jamaica Coffee-house; I will meet him there to-morrow morning, and

fix upon a proper method to accommodate matters to his entire satisfaction" Mr Fitzpatrick did not meet Mr Moody. However, he sent a gentleman to him with whom he was well acquainted, and one very willing and able to bring about a reconciliation between the audience and the actor. Mr Fitzpatrick now began to view his conduct with impartial eyes, and to make some amends for his past outrageous conduct to the actor and manager. He wrote a letter to Mr Garrick in a strain very condescending, and to a proud man sufficiently humiliating. The chief purpose of his epistle was to acquaint him that, whenever he thought proper to introduce Mr Moody to the audience, he and all his friends would attend, and contribute to his being reinstated in the favour of the public.

Though Mr. Fitzpatrick's plan of reformation, as he called it, was principally levelled at Mr Garrick, yet, as he was now engaged in a publick cause, he thought it would appear very partial if he did not oblige Mr Beard, the manager of Covent Garden, to submit to the same regulations he had imposed on Mr. Garrick. To this end Fitzpatrick proceeded, with his associates, the night following, from the conquest of Drury Lane to undertake that of Covent Garden. He there delivered an harangue similar to his oration at Drury Lane, and insisted on the manager's compliance. Mr. Beard answered the speech of the orator with great firmness, and with a strong appearance of reason, he more particularly observed, that operas had never been exhibited at such small prices anywhere as at his theatre; that the nightly expenses were prodigiously increased since the days of former managers; and that the public ought not to grudge the full charge when no expense in actors, cloaths, scenes, music, and every decoration of the stage had been spared for their entertainment. All this, and much more, was urged in vain by the manager. But they insisted peremptorily on a positive answer to their demand. Would he comply with their regulation of prices, or not? This being answered in the negative, they then demolished the playhouse in such a manner that the carpenters could not repair the damages sustained in the scenery and other parts of the theatre in less than four or five days. Mr. Beard being determind to maintain and defend his

property by legal methods, took care to fix upon some of the rioters, and, with the help of a chief justice's warrant, brought two or three of them before Lord Mansfield. Mr Fitzpatrick, alarmed at the manager's resolution, thought proper to attend the judge, where the usual paleness of his cheek was rendered perfectly of a livid colour by the dreadful rebuke of Lord Mansfield, who told him solemnly, that if a life was lost in this tumultuous contest, he would be answerable for it with his own

As soon as the playhouse was refitted they attended as before, but contented themselves with laughing, hissing, and such like innocent practices, to interrupt the play, till the manager should comply with their arbitrary decrees. Mr. Beard, finding it impossible to keep open the doors of the theatre to any purpose without submitting to these dictators, at last complied, and peace was restored. The gang, thus victorious, now determined to force the other house to yield \*

"In London," wrote the same person to a Dublin paper, "in the year 1722, a riot was committed at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, by a set of profligate young men of quality, which shut up that playhouse for eight or nine days. But the legislature (by the King's direction) entered so warmly into the affair, that the rioters thought proper to make the suffering manager ample satisfaction, and His Majesty ordered a guard to attend that theatre from this accident, which Mr. Rich enjoys to this day. At the last riot in Drury Lane Theatre in 1743, His Majesty was pleased to give the same direction, and the Lord Chief Justice Lee declared from the bench, it was his opinion that a continual hissing was a manifest breach of the peace, as it was the beginning of a riot"

\* An engraving of this scene of riot was issued, which is curious as showing what the arrangement of the interior of a playhouse was at this time. The mode of illuminating the stage is particularly shown, the three suspended chandeliers hung over the stage, with a single one in the middle. Each seems to contain about a dozen candles

In the outbreak on February 24th, the doorkeepers of the Covent Garden theatre were driven from their posts, the pit seats torn up, and the performances put an end to by the tumult.

A grand effort, however, in the year 1755, led to some very serious commotions, which it required all the arts of this accomplished manager to allay. This was the well-known riot in connection with "The Chinese Festival," a grand pantomime entertainment of dancing, composed by Mr. Noverre, in which above a hundred persons were employed.

"Many worthless disappointed writers, that are unavoidably angry with the manager of a theatre, are always ready to lay hold of any opportunity to injure him ; and a very popular one offered, viz. that of engaging and bringing over a troop of Frenchmen to the King's Theatre, in London, just as England had declared war with France. Many paragraphs in the newspapers were artfully and wickedly drawn up to the following effect, viz. 'That the managers had sent over, not only for French dancers, but French dresses also, and even for French carpenters and manufacturers.' The managers had been complained of for several seasons that they had presumed upon their success with the public, and would not be at any expense for good dancers and other elegant decorations to their plays. To remove this complaint they applied to Mr. Denoyer, senior, to recommend some person of genius, and he engaged Mr. Noverre, a Swiss by birth. His troop was composed of Italians, Swiss, Germans, and Frenchmen, and all engaged by Noverre long before the declaration of war with France, but as the time employed to gather this company, their voyage hither, the making above a hundred new dresses (which were all made in London), and the many practices required for so difficult an exhibition, took more than eighteen months, within that space



of time war was declared with France. It was performed six nights, but though commanded by the late King, who honoured it with his presence, could not escape ill-treatment. On the second, third, fourth, and fifth nights the rioters were constantly opposed by several young men of fashion, and even blows exchanged, but on the sixth night they exerted the utmost violence, and, after doing all the mischief in their power to the theatre, they inflamed the mob without doors to join them to attack Mr Garrick's house in Southampton Street, which was saved with some difficulty. And thus the managers, for their bold attempt to entertain the public magnificently, were compelled to submit to the loss of more than 4000*l* !

"Some nights after," says Tate Wilkinson, "Mr Garrick advertised his performance in *Archer*, when, on his entrance, something murmured like 'Pardon, pardon!' on which he advanced with great respect and as great firmness, explaining how ill he had been treated by the wanton and malignant conduct of wicked individuals, both in his property, fame, and character. He acknowledged all favours received, but unless he was that night permitted to perform his duty to the best of his abilities, he was above want, superior to insult, and would never, *never* appear on the stage again. While he was speaking all tumult ceased, it was indeed a calm after a storm. They seemed so struck with the truths which he asserted and addressed to them, the propriety of his conduct, and the injury from illiberality and wicked wantonness he had actually sustained, that from the idea of censuring Mr. Garrick unmeritedly, they felt the reproach deservedly on themselves, and, like true-hearted Britons, burst into such an universal according applause as for several minutes shook the fabric of Old Drury. Harmony was settled before and behind the curtain."

Here is the bill of the performance, interesting as a specimen of the mode in which such things were drawn up.

## THEATRE ROYAL IN DRURY LANE.

This present Wednesday, being the 12th of November, will be  
presented a Comedy, called

## THE INCONSTANT

Captain Duretête by Mr WOODWARD,  
Young Mirabel by Mr PALMER,  
Old Mirabel by Mr. YATES,  
Dugaid by Mr BLAKES,  
Petit by Mr USHER,  
Oriana by Mrs DAVIES,  
Lamorce by Mrs BENNET,  
Bissarre by Mrs. CLIVE

To which will be added a new grand Entertainment of Dancing,  
called

## THE CHINESE FESTIVAL,

Composed by Mr. NOVERRE

The characters by

Mons DELAISTRE, Sig BALETTI, Mr LAUCHERY,  
Mr Noveire, jun, Mr Dennison, Mons St Leger, Mr Shaw-  
ford, Mr Mathews, Mons Pochee, Mons L'Clerc, Mr Harrison,  
Mr Gnanier, Mr Hust, Mons Sarny, Mr Walker,

Mrs VERNON, Miss NOVERRE,

Mr. Morris, Mr. Rooker, Mr Sturt, Mr Atkins, Mr Ackman,  
Mr Walker, Siga Pietro, Mis Addison, Mrs Noverre, Mrs  
Gibbons, Mad Charon, Mad Rousselet, Mrs Preston, Mad.

Rouend, Mis Philips, Mrs Lawson,

The Little PIETRO, Miss YOUNG,

Master Simson, Master Pope, Master Blagden, Master Hust,  
Master Spilsbury, Miss Bride, Miss Popling, Miss Simson,  
Miss Heath, Mr Scrase, Mr Lewis, Mr Jefferson, Mr Burton,  
Mr Marr, Mr Vaughan, Mr. Chamness, Mr Bullbrick, Mr  
Clough, Mr Allen, Mr. Gray, Mrs Bradshaw, Mis Hippisley,

Mrs Mathews, Mrs Simson, and Miss Mills

With new music, scenes, machines, habits, and other decorations

Boxes, 5s Pit, 3s First Gallery, 2s Upper Gallery, 1s

Places for the boxes to be had of Mr Varney at the stage-  
door of the theatre.

*No persons can possibly be admitted behind the scenes or into  
the orchestra. Nothing under the full prices will be taken  
during the whole performance.*

The two houses, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, being now in full rivalry, the manager of the latter house must have had but a poor chance in the combat. He was a strange being, but was well served by his deputy and stage-manager, James Quin. This rough, jovial man must have found it a difficult task to administer affairs behind the scenes of Covent Garden.

His figure, indeed, stands out from the theatrical background like a well-painted full-length portrait by his friend Hogarth. There are some others of these full, round, and attractive portraits, such as Foote and Garrick, on which the eye rests at once. There are a number of "stock" anecdotes familiar enough of Quin, but there are others not nearly so well known.

Bath, where he retired to end his days, always suggests his memory, and, indeed, has a pleasant theatrical fragrance "Quin," says a pleasant actor, who lived a good deal there, "like Foote, was distinguished for a certain contempt for a portion of the society he courted, namely, the more noble but less intelligent. Dining one day at a party in Bath, he uttered something which caused a general murmur of delight. A nobleman present, who was not illustrious for the brilliancy of his ideas, exclaimed 'What a pity 'tis, Quin, my boy, that a clever fellow like you should be a player!' Quin fixed and flashed his eye upon the person, with this reply 'What would your lordship have me be?—a lord!'"

The following is a masterly retort. Some person whom he had offended met him one day in the street, and stopped him. "Mr. Quin," said he, "I—I—I understand, sir, you have been taking away my name!" "What have I said, sir?" "You—you—you called me a scoundrel, sir!" "Keep your name," replied he, and walked on.

From Bath were to come stories of the jovial actor, his wit and *gourmandise*, which offer a curious view of his character.

He was often invited to Hampton by Garrick, who wrote many pleasant rhymes on his friend, and finally composed his epitaph.

That tongue which set the table in a roar,  
And charm'd the public ear, is heard no more .  
Clos'd are those eyes, the harbinger of wit,  
Which spake before the tongue what Shakspeare writ.  
Cold is that hand which, living, was stretch'd forth  
At Friendship's call to succour modest worth  
Here lies James Quin.

It is reported that the day before he died "he drank a bottle of claret." He died on January 21st, 1766, and left a respectable sum behind. After legacies of 100*l* and 50*l*. to wine merchants and landladies, including a sum of 50*l* to Gainsborough, he bequeathed the residue to a "Mr. Nobbes, oilman, in the Strand," and to Mr Lowth, apparently a tavern-keeper. Long before, however, he had retired he was active in the direction of Covent Garden.

At Mr Quin's *petit soupers* (says one who was often a guest there), which were honoured with the presence of some of the brightest geniuses of the age, nothing escaped that could offend a female ear. There the conversation was delicate, lively, and interspersed with everything that could improve the understanding as well as delight the heart.

Miss Bellamy was a favourite of his, and in her recollections—making due allowance for the exaggerations of a vain and beautiful creature—there are some curious and useful incidents of life "behind the scenes" in those days

I was soon announced to bring up the rear of our theatrical forces in the character of Belvidera. When, to my great surprise, instead of the crowded house I had flattered myself with playing to, it was far from full. My own reception, indeed, was as warm as it had ever been, but still I was dis-

satisfied At the conclusion of the piece, however, Mr. Town, whom I have already taken notice of, hearing another piece given out for the following evening, cried out "The same! the same!" The audience joined, as usual, in the cry; and by this eventual stroke, the same play, "Venice Preserved," was performed for four successive nights to crowded houses.

On the death of Thomson, a play was got up, under the auspices of his friends Lord Lyttleton and Quin, with a prologue, to secure a provision for his sisters.

As soon as the piece was perfect, an evening rehearsal was called, upon a night when there happened to be no performance Mr Quin's pronunciation was of the old school In this Mr Garrick had made an alteration The one pronounced the letter *a* open, the other sounded it like an *e*, which occasioned the following laughable mistake. In the piece, when the Roman ladies came in procession to solicit Coriolanus to return to Rome, they are attended by the tribunes And the centurions of the Volscian army bearing *fasces*, their ensigns of authority, they are ordered by the hero (the part of which was played by Mr. Quin) to lower them as a token of respect But the men who personated the centurions, imagining, through Mr. Quin's mode of pronunciation, that he said their *faces*, instead of their *fasces*, all bowed their heads together

The picture of the Covent Garden green-room at this time offers scenes of disorder. Miss Bellamy was twice carried from the stage by daring profligates, on the first occasion by Lord Byron, on the second by Mr Metham. There was the rivalry of favourite actresses, such as the good-natured but coarse Woffington, who is a conspicuous figure, a "dashing," good, humane, but violent creature On the night of Mr Quin's benefit a great crowd attended, and among other visitors was the eccentric Duchess of Queensberry, who desired to visit the green-room "This she did; but on ushering in this lady of quality the only sight which presented

itself to her view was Mrs. Woffington with a pot of porter in her hand, crying out 'Confusion to all order' The lowest *canaille* of the theatre surrounded a table covered with mutton-pies, and seemed, by their manner and appearance, to realise the sentiment just toasted by the beautiful heroine Her grace seemed petrified with astonishment at a spectacle she so little expected On recovering herself she exclaimed 'Is all hell broke loose?' and hurried away to her chair" Another strange adventure presently followed

Mr. Quin, thinking that the force of the company lay in comedy, introduced me into every piece which contained a character suited to my figure and age As he was excellent in the *Double Dealer*, and Mrs. Woffington was well received in *Lady Touchwood*, I had an opportunity of appearing in *Lady Froth*, a character which would afford ample room for the exertion of my fancy and humour. Whether the applause I had received, or the brilliancy of my dress, or some other cause, occasioned it I know not, but I was elevated by an uncommon flow of spirits on the first night of its performance Thus cheerful, as I sat in the green-room, who should enter it but Mr. Montgomery, since Sir George Metham, whom I have already mentioned as an admirer of mine The unexpected sight of that gentleman greatly surprised me, and without considering how preposterous such a step might appear to the performers, I found myself involuntarily led by some impulse, to which I had till now been a stranger, to get up to receive him as he approached me. Such a mark of distinction could not pass unnoticed by him, and he seemed to receive it with inexpressible transport. Nor did it pass unobserved by Mrs. Woffington. The tender respect he showed me seemed to hurt her pride. As to the other female performers present, they were all, except Mrs. Ward, persons of more respectable characters They loved their husbands, minded their business, and found too much employment in their own families to trouble themselves with the concerns of others. As the attention of a person whose dress, deportment, and appearance proclaimed him a man of fashion, seemed to excite the jealousy

of Mrs. Woffington, who expected to have the tribute of admiration from everyone first paid to her, I put an end, as soon as possible, to our *tête-à-tête*. But, at the conclusion of the play, Mr. Metham accosted me again, and desired permission to wait on me the next morning. This, I told him, I could not grant, he then begged to be allowed to write to me, which I did not refuse. Upon this we parted.

But this jealousy soon developed into a bitter hostility, and the two ladies had an open quarrel, which excited the amusement of the town and set the pens of the wits at work. The story of their jealousies is amusing

Mr. Rich (Miss Bellamy tells us) had been advised to revive Lee's tragedy of "Alexander," as the character of that hero would suit the powers and show the person of Barry to singular advantage. The parts of the rival queens he judged would be likewise well filled by Mrs. Woffington and myself. The animosity this lady had long borne me had not experienced any decrease, on the contrary, my late additional finery in my jewels, etc. had augmented it to something very near hatred. I had during the summer given Madame Montête, wife of the hairdresser of the time, who was going to Paris, a commission to bring me from thence two tragedy dresses, the most elegant she could purchase. I have already observed that the proprietor allowed me a certain sum to find my own habiliments. My *chargée d'affaires* opened her credentials at Madame Bonfoy's, principal *marchand du mode* in that metropolis. I had requested this lady to consult Brilliant, who would consult Du Menil. She was likewise to take the joint opinion of all the people of taste there upon an affair of such momentous consequence. My royal robes, in which I had represented the Empress Fulvia, in Doctor Francis's "Constantine," to the great loss of the public, had not been seen by them. They were showy and proper for the character. But in these *robes de cour* taste and elegance were never so happily blended, particularly in one of them, the ground of which was a deep yellow. Mr. Rich had purchased a suit of her royal highness's (the Princess Dowager of Wales), for

Mrs Woffington to appear in Roxana. It was not in the least soiled, and looked very beautiful by daylight, but, being a straw colour, it seemed to be a dirty white by candlelight—especially when my splendid yellow was by it. *To this yellow dress I had added a purple robe,\** and a mixture so happy made it appear, if possible, to greater advantage. Thus accoutred in all my magnificence, I made my *entrée* into the green-room as the Persian Princess. But how shall I describe the feelings of my inveterate rival! As soon as she saw me, almost bursting with rage, she drew herself up, and thus, with a haughty air, addressed me. “I desire, madam, you will never more, upon any account, wear those clothes in the piece we perform to-night.” I replied “I know not, madam, by what right you take upon you to dictate to me what I shall wear. And I assure you, madam, you must ask it in a very different manner before you obtain my compliance.” She now found it necessary to solicit in a softer strain, and I readily gave my assent. The piece consequently went through without any more murmuring on her part, whatever might be her sensations.

However, the next night I sported my other suit, which was much more splendid than the former. This rekindled Mrs. Woffington’s rage, so that it nearly bordered on madness. When—oh! dire to tell!—she drove me off the carpet, and gave me the *coup de grâce* almost behind the scenes, the audience, who, I believe, preferred hearing my last dying speech to seeing her beauty and fine attitude, could not avoid perceiving her violence, and testified their displeasure at it.

Though I despise revenge, I do not dislike retaliation. I therefore put on my yellow and purple once more. As soon as I appeared in the green-room, her fury could not be kept within bounds, notwithstanding one of the *corps diplomatique* was then paying homage to her beauty, and for the moment made her imagine she had the power of control equal to a real queen. She imperiously questioned me, how I dared to dress again in the manner she had so strictly prohibited. The only return I made to this insolent interrogation was by a smile of contempt. Upon which, she immediately sent for

\* A rich effect certainly, but we may wonder how the six or eight chandeliers over the stage could light up the colours.



Mr Rich, but that gentleman prudently declined attending her summons

Being now ready to burst with the contending passions which agitated her bosom, she told me it was well for me that I had a *minister* to supply my extravagance with jewels and such paraphernalia. Finding I had got myself into a disagreeable predicament, I made as quick an exit as possible, notwithstanding I wore the regalia of a queen\*. It may be supposed that after so public a rupture we never spoke.

A strange sequel now occurred behind the scenes, which caused some talk. Miss Bellamy had been much "followed" by a man of fashion, Mr Metham, who, like other men of fashion, seemed to have been admitted behind the scenes. One night she was performing *Lady Fanciful*, when they had some difference.

At the beginning of the fifth act (she tells us), as I was crossing the back of the scenes, in order to go on the stage from the opposite side, Mr. Metham met me, and conjured me to let him speak one word with me in the hall. As the prompter never rings the bell for the music to cease till he sees all those who are to begin the act ready to go on, I complied for a moment with his request. But I was no sooner got without the door, than he caught me up in his arms, and, hurrying through the passage, placed me in a coach that his valet had ready to receive me. The audience at the theatre, as I afterwards learnt, being out of all patience at so unusual a continuation of the music, made the noise they generally do upon such occasions. This called Mr Quin from his dressing-room, which lay contiguous to the stage, to inquire the reason of it. *Lady Fanciful* was repeatedly called, but no *Lady Fanciful* answered. It was now found that a real rape (if a running away with, where there is no resistance, might be so termed) had interrupted the progress of the play. Nothing remained to be done but to acquaint the house with what

\* The next season Mr Foote produced a little piece, which he entitled, "The Green-room Squabble, or, A Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius."

had unexpectedly happened. Mr Quin, accordingly, in the character of Sir John Brute, which he was performing, made an apology to the audience by informing them that he was come to beg their excuse for the fantastical girl of quality, whose company they would unfortunately be disappointed of at the conclusion of the piece, as she had left heart-free, upon finding an admirer *that was made on purpose for her*.

This further illustrates what has been so often insisted upon in these pages—the intimate relation between the manners of the time and the stage.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FOOTE AND THE MIMICS.

THE first year of Garrick's management was remarkable as bringing seriously forward the late celebrated Samuel Foote, who, after failing as a regular actor, now appeared at the Haymarket in quite an original form of entertainment, depending on his own powers of mimicry and vivacity, being the earliest of those clever delineators who later followed. Foote, however, differed from these in employing inferior characters to help him, and a sort of drama was given, but it could not be called an "entertainment of the stage."

It will be seen how easily the law was evaded by the advertisement of his predecessor in the place.

At Cibber's Academy in the Haymarket will be a Concert, after which will be exhibited (*gratis*) a rehearsal, in the form of a play, called "Romeo and Juliet."

The following advertisement also adds a picture of the shifts theatrical adventurers had recourse to to baffle the magistrates. In 1756, Theo Cibber appeared at the Richmond Theatre, and issued the following :

Cibber and Co, snuff merchants, sell at their warehouse at Richmond Hill most excellent cephalic snuff, which, taken in moderate quantities, in the evening especially, will not fail

to raise the spirits, clear the brain, throw off all ill humours, dispel the spleen, enliven the imagination, exhilarate the mind, give joy to the heart, and greatly invigorate and improve the understanding. Mr Cibber has also opened at the aforesaid warehouse, late called the Theatre, on the hill, an histrionic academy for the instruction of young persons of genius in the art of acting, and proposes, for the better improvement of such pupils, and frequently with his assistance, to give public rehearsals without hire, gain, or reward.

Foote called his show "Diversions of the Morning," and as there were dialogues with characters, the Drury Lane patentee interposed and attempted to put him down. He then adopted the fiction of inviting people to tea—"Mr. Foote will give tea;" then he had "an auction of pictures," and his personalities, and the lifelike way in which he introduced well-known characters, made him most acceptable. The late Mr. Forster, an admirable specimen of the literary man, and one of the last of the really sound and cultured critics, looked on Foote with extraordinary favour. But this was scarcely warranted. There is not a parallel in literary history of a man for many years making a livelihood by bringing successively on the stage any person known for a little oddity, or even for physical infirmity. A long list could be made out of the persons he thus tortured.

Among Mr. Murphy's papers was found a sketch of Foote's life.

Samuel Foote was born (I believe, but that may easily be ascertained by the register) about the year 1721, at Truro, in Cornwall; his father, who was an attorney, and some time member for Tiverton in Devonshire, had considerable places under Government, his mother was of the ancient family of the Dineleys, of Charlton in Worcestershire, who married with the Gooderes, of Burghope in Herefordshire; both of these families were of an eccentric turn of mind, which Mr Foote appears to have inherited and preserved to the last. In 1739,

being indisposed, he was advised to go to Bath, where he soon made acquaintance with gamesters and men of pleasure. On returning to college, with two footmen and a ridiculous quantity of laced clothes, he was reproved by the provost; when, finding a college life not suited to his genius, he quitted it in 1740, but without any public censure. He had an early turn for mimicry and acting. He is said, when at Oxford, to have acted Punch in disguise. In the interval, from the time of his leaving college and coming upon the stage, he was frequently in great distress. He was once confined for debt in the Fleet, and, I believe, released by an act of insolvency, at the same time, one White was there confined for cheating the Bank. An old schoolfellow told me he dined with him there on turbot, venison, and claret, and never spent a cheerfuller day, for, while White found money, Mr Foote furnished wit, jollity, and humour. His first essay, as an author, was written about this time, it was a pamphlet giving an account of one of his uncles, who was executed for murdering his other uncle.

In one of his excursions to Oxford with a certain lady, for whom he afterwards procured an husband, he drove a coach and six grays. He rented Charlton House, the family seat in Worcestershire, where he lived in some splendour for about a year and a half. During his magnificence there he invited his old schoolmaster, Mr. Miles, to dine with him, who, admiring his service of plate and well-furnished sideboard, very innocently asked Mr. Foote what it might cost? Indeed, says he, I know not, but sure I am I shall soon know what it will bring. He was too fond of detraction and mimicry, adds Mr Jesse Foote, which were blemishes in his conversation, though you were entertained by them. He was ridiculously vain of his family and of his classical knowledge, which was superficial, and boasted of his numerous relations amongst the old nobility. He was very extravagant, but by no means generous; though he spared no expense in his entertainments nor in wine, yet he did not understand a table. He affected to have disguised cookery and French dishes, and never eat plain meat. He was not clean in his person, and was disgusting in his manner of eating, but he was so pleasant a fellow, and had such a flow of spirits, that you forgot his faults and pardoned his want of

elegance and decency ; he always took the lead in conversation, and was generally the chief or sole performer.

This is a bitter sketch, yet not exaggerated

He was civil to your face, and seldom put you out of humour with yourself, but you paid for his civility the moment you were out of his company, and were sure of being made ridiculous, yet he was not as malignant as some men I have known, but his vanity and the desire he had of showing his wit made him run into satire and detraction. He loved titled men, and was proud of their company, though he gave himself airs of treating them with scorn. He was licentious and profligate, and frequently made a jest of religion and morality. He told a story very well, and added many pleasant circumstances of his own invention to heighten it, and could speak plausibly on grave subjects, but he soon grew tired of serious conversation, and returned naturally to his favourite amusement, mimicry, in which he did not excel, for he was coarse and unfair, and drew caricatures. But he entertained you more than a closer mimic.

He was a bad actor, and always ran into farce, and in tragedy he was detestable, for whenever he aimed at expression he was distorted. His voice, face, and figure were equally disagreeable, yet, under all these disadvantages, he acted many parts in his own plays much better than those who have appeared in them since his death, such as Major Sturgeon, Cadwallader, the Nabob, etc., these are characters strongly ridiculous, and he succeeded in them. As a writer he had merit, though his principal characters are portraits ; but if he had been more diligent in finishing his pieces they might afford entertainment on the stage at this day. He was always buying rings, snuff-boxes, toys, etc., which were a great expense to him, and was a bubble at play.

In one of his clever friend's note-books was found the following hint for a character in a play

Foote gives a dinner, large company, characters come one by one, sketches them as they come, each enters, he glad to see each. At dinner his wit, affectation, pride, his expense, his

plate, his jokes, his stories, all laugh; all go one by one, all abused, one by one; his toad-eaters stay, he praises himself in a passion against all the world

This scene actually occurred, and is described by Mr. Edgeworth.

In private life he showed the same unamiable qualities, and nothing was so commonly reported of him, or so well known, as this practice of ridiculing any friend who left the company Tate Wilkinson gives a graphic sketch of him in this mood Sir F. Delaval had just brought Wilkinson in to his dinner-table

And as a trait I have before observed in Foote's character when his real best friend, Sir Francis Delaval, left the room, where there were not less than eight or ten persons, each of whom he knew would relate again what he said, he burst out into a loud laugh, and turning to me said "Wilkinson, did you ever hear such a hound giving his sentiments on good tables and living? Since my return from Ireland," added Foote, "I have had the mortification to dine here six times, and each day a d—— large loin of pork on the table, which he calls a dinner! I'll not dine here again these three months, for I suppose he means to run his loin of pork against 'The Beggar's Opera'!"

Foote has been panegyrised brilliantly by some of the leading critics of our time. Of his abilities there can be no question; but there can be little doubt that, as a member of society, he was a wretch, a cruel, heartless fellow, and a nuisance. He gained his living by giving pain to others, and as his wants increased so the tortures he inflicted were increased. His practice was to excite curiosity and applause by bringing public people on the stage, not merely for harmless laughter, but in a sort of malignant way.

He "took off" physical infirmities of women, the old, the young—spared nothing. Two or three persons he did spare—one, Dr. Johnson, who bought a cudgel, and said that he had

done so ; another, a well-known Dr Kennedy, who was upset in a sedan going to Dr Goldsmith's, and was nearly killed. On this Foote, who had him sketched, "felt," as Goldsmith said, "for once compunctious, and forbore"

Here we have an excellent touching of Foote, besides showing nice observation of character and dramatic sketching Says Wilkinson .

Mr. Foote was irresistible, spontaneous, and not confined to manner or character ; for wherever he aimed his humour and raillery, he shot the object as it flew by his quick fancy, and all with a superior degree to his opponents

When Mr. Garrick was at the noon rehearsals, he ever was on the listen, and if he heard Foote and the performers joking, would enter all full of whim, and affected easy affability and equality, and made himself one of the laughing group , and at every jest of Foote's appeared to pay particular tributes of surprise, applause, and attention , but when in turn he related what he had studied and prepared as very comical, if the same repetition of approbation as had gone before, attendant to Foote's humour, was wanting to his, he has been cut to the soul at finding Foote's superiority, which was generally the consequence when both were pitched for battle and eager for victory at the game of repartee and sparring sarcasm , and which was frequently granted to Foote by the courtiers and adulators of Garrick, even depending on the smiles of their master, and under the apprehension of incurring the terror and loss of favour from offended majesty.

One great reason, as a man of wit, for Foote's superiority on such convivial meetings was that he, like the American, felt bold, knew his superiority, which was raised by the perfect knowledge of Garrick's fears, and which made Foote so easy that he gave not himself the trouble to hate. Mr Foote would frequently say to Mr. Garrick "Bless me, we have been laughing away our time , it is past three o'clock , have you and Mrs. Garrick enough for a third, without infringing on your servants' generosity, for I know they are on board wages ? Besides, the kitchen fire may be gone out, if it be one of your cold-meat days, or if one of Mrs Garrick's fast days ; I



cannot expect a dinner on emergency " On Foote's repeating such a whimsical jargon, Garrick would act a laugh like Bayes, though all the joke lay, like Mr. Bayes', in the boots.

It is curious that through the whole course of the English stage can be traced this distinct line of entertainment, and which, always popular, was in its greatest vogue during the last century. It was reserved, however, for one era—that of Garrick and Foote—to make signal profit out of mimicking other actors and their doings on the stage. The pedigree of the successful mimics might be thus set out: Garrick, Foote, Tate Wilkinson, Stevens, Mathews, Bannister. To these succeeded the more general, and therefore harmless—Parry's, Woodin's, etc. Foote was certainly the most powerful of this class, he possessed real humour and was a vigorous writer, but he was cruel, unscrupulous, and the more detestable because he lived and made money by torturing his victims. It was strange the retribution that overtook him, as he himself became the victim of another who made a scandalous charge against him, and crushed him.

It seems extraordinary, the delight of the public in this sort of entertainment, and the enjoyment with which they received this imitation on the stage of a theatre. A subsidiary mimic, whom Foote himself trained, and who afterwards became a well-known character—Tate Wilkinson—has left us some graphic accounts of their practices, and of the confusion the introduction of such an element on the legitimate boards led to. The scenes he records are full of comedy, and, as they illustrate the theatrical manners of the time, may be perused with interest. This young fellow, who was clever, forward, and spiteful, Foote took to Dublin with him, to help him in his show.

It was appointed for me to appear the Monday following in Mr. Foote's "Tea," in the character of a pupil, under Mr. Puzzle, the supposed director of a rehearsal. Mr. Puzzle, by Mr. Foote.

When the night came, Lord Forbes, Mr. Chaigneau, and all my friends went to encourage and support me, and engaged all they knew for the same purpose.

The bill ran thus.

*After the PLAY*

Mr Foote will give "TEA"

Mr Puzzle (the instructor), Mr Foote

First Pupil, by a YOUNG GENTLEMAN.

*(Who never appeared on any stage before)*

By eight in the evening I was in full dress behind the scenes, I had never been there before; the company were all strangers to me. I not knowing how to enter into conversation with the performers, and being announced as a pupil of Mr Foote's, I did not receive any civility from them. I, on reflection, soon grew weary of my solitary seat in the green-room, alone in a crowd, and between the play and farce looked through a hole in the curtain and beheld an awful pleasing sight—a crowded, splendid audience, such as might strike the boldest with dismay.

The farce began, and Mr Foote gained great applause, and roars of laughter succeeded. In the second act my time of trial drew near, in about ten minutes I was called "Mr Wilkinson! Mr Wilkinson!" Had I obeyed a natural impulse, I was really so alarmed that I should have run away. But honour pricked me on, there was no alternative—my brain was a chaos, but on I went, and must have made a very sheepish, timid appearance, as from fear, late illness, and apprehension, I trembled like a frightened clown in a pantomime, which Foote perceiving, good-naturedly took me by the hand and led me forward.

Foote, perceiving I was not fit for action, said to his two friends on the stage (seated like Smith and Johnson in the rehearsal) "This young gentleman has not yet been properly drilled. But come, my young friend, walk across the stage; breathe yourself, and show your figure." I did so, the walk encouraged me, and another loud applause succeeded. I felt a glow, which seemed to say "What have you to fear? Now, or never. This is the night that either makes you or undoes you quite." And on the applause being repeated, I said to myself, "That is as loud as any I have heard given to Mr Garrick." I mustered up courage and began with Mr Luke Sparks of

London (brother to Isaac Sparks, then in Dublin), in the character of Capulet. Most of the gentlemen in the boxes knew all the London players. A gentleman cried out, "Sparks of London! Sparks of London!" The applause resounded, even to my astonishment, and the audience were equally amazed, as they found something where they in fact expected nothing. Next speech was their favourite Bary in "Alexander," universally known, and as universally felt. I now found myself vastly elated and clever. Fear was vanished, and joy and pleasure succeeded, a proof what barometers we are! how soon elated, and how soon depressed! When quite at ease, I began with Mrs Woffington in Lady Macbeth, and Bairy in Macbeth. The laughter (which is the strongest applause on a comic occasion) was so loud and incessant that I could not proceed. This was a minute of luxury, I was then in the region of bliss, I was encored. A sudden thought occurred, I felt all hardy, all alert, all nerve, and immediately advanced six steps. My master, as he was called, sat on the stage at the same time, I repeated twelve or fourteen lines of the very prologue he had spoke that night (being called for) to the author, and he had almost every night repeated. I before Mr Foote presented his other self, the audience from repetition were as perfect as I was, his manner, his voice, his oddities I so exactly hit, that the pleasure, the glee it gave may easily be conceived, to see and hear the mimic mimicked, and it really gave me a complete victory over Mr Foote, for the suddenness of the action tripped up his audacity so much, that he, with all his effrontery, sat foolish, *wishing to appear equally pleased with the audience, but knew not how to play that difficult part* he was unprepared; the surprise and satisfaction was such, that, without any conclusion, the curtain was obliged to drop with reiterated bursts of applause. They are remarkable in Dublin, when pleased, to continue applauding till the curtain falls, often not suffering the play to finish.

When the farce, called "Tea," was concluded, I had great congratulations paid seriously and ironically. Mr. Foote affected to be vastly pleased; but, in truth, it was merely affectation, so differently do we feel for ourselves when ridicule is pointed at us, but he said it was perfectly well judged to make free with him, yet he did not think it very like himself,

for it certainly was my worst imitation, but he rejoiced at my good fortune

The conversation the next day, particularly of all my eager partial friends, was an universal cry of "Foote outdone! Foote outdone! the pupil the master!"

But ill-nature was never so fearfully and strangely chastised. The man who had taken off physical infirmities himself was maimed for life by a fall from his horse, and he who had made so many wretched by the terror of his ridicule, was at last sent to his grave by a terrible charge—untrue, no doubt, but the effect of which was the same as though it had been true. What a contrast between him and the amiable Goldsmith!\*

\* Some of his frolics were amusing. "A baronet who was there, and had been crossed in love, became, from disappointment, such a hypochondriac, that at times he was a damper to their mirth, and all their fun had no effect to chase his melancholy. Every day complaining of some new bodily complaint, one night they hid a tailor in a large closet in his bedroom, and whilst he was asleep his waistcoat was considerably reduced in breadth, when, putting it on in the morning, he was so alarmed, expecting a speedy dropsy, that he lay in bed for three days afterwards, in the meantime his waistcoat was returned to its former size. On his recovery, the first night at supper, Foote had previously proposed to have the wax candles painted different colours, and to place before the disconsolate visitor a black one, at the same time the whole party, as well as the servants, were in the secret. At supper, fixing his eyes some time on it, he observed to those who sat next to him, 'The candles seem to have different colours.' 'Why, what colour should they have?' was the reply. For the present he took no further notice, but, calling to the servant for some wine, when he brought it (the black candle right before him) asked him the colour of the candle. 'White, to be sure, sir,' was his immediate reply. On the instant, he rose, exclaiming, 'This is too much,' and hurried out of the room. The next morning, at an early hour, he ordered his carriage and returned to town to consult his physician."

## CHAPTER V.

“DOUGLAS.”

THE story of Home and his play is highly characteristic of the nature of the Scotch, who had persuaded themselves of the merits of his play, and by a fixed determination resolved that justice should be done to him, and the piece brought out. With characteristic energy the plan was carried through, even though it was found to involve a conflict with the Church, of which the author and his leading friends were ordained ministers. Persons in high places encouraged their promising countryman, so that under such auspices success for a good and poetical piece was assured, while it is likely that a piece of equal merit, but less befriended, might have failed.

It was thus that there was produced at Covent Garden one of the few noted plays which made a sensation, and for a long time belonged to the “stock list.” This was the tragedy of “Douglas,” written by a Scotch clergyman. In the composition of this work the friends of the bard combined to aid him with critical lights and suggestions, including the amiable Sir Gilbert Elliot. When it was at last completed, it was twice offered to Garrick, and declined by him, and on the second occasion the author set out for London, accompanied by a number of admirers and “bottle-holders,” strong believers in

the play. This was in 1755, and Garrick, in declining, declared that it was totally unfit for the stage. Mr Forster hints that this was owing to the prominent female character, which awakened the jealousy of Davy. The truth was, its rejection may be set down, not as a want of judgment, or as prompted by any invidious motive, but as one of those unlucky mistakes which nearly every manager has to repent, owing to weariness, or carelessness, or accident. The fact of its being presented by an obscure clergyman was sufficient warrant for the manager to decline its acceptance.

But, indeed, the ministers of that day seemed, according to Dr Carlyle's account, to have been a loose and disorderly class, and the Presbytery of Glasgow spoke in quaintly amusing style of "the melancholy fact that there should have been a tragedy written by a minister of the Church." There were more heinous offences that might have "exercised" them. However, some thirty years later, when Mrs Siddons visited Edinburgh, it was found impossible to have a full meeting of the Assembly on the nights she performed.

When the play was taken to London to Covent Garden, the hero was performed by Barry with extraordinary success. It long remained a stock-piece, while "My name is Norval" is firmly rooted in the school "speakers," and is a favourite "delivery" for schoolboys. The enthusiastic Scots of the day pronounced that it was superior to Shakespeare. Garrick, now repentant and eager, brought out other of his pieces, but they were failures—the reason of this lack of success being that, in the first case, he had written a play because he had a story to tell, in the second, he had contrived a story because he had to write a play. A Scotch parson, and a Scotch subject, could not have been recommendations. Much mortified, he returned home, and the piece was brought out at Edinburgh, where it had great success, though bringing much

trouble to the clergy who attended the performances, the part of the hero being taken by West Digges, "a great profligate and spendthrift," says Dr Carlyle, "and poltroon, I am afraid, into the bargain." Mrs Ward "created" the part of Lady Randolph

The sensation produced is not more remarkable than is the curious interest in the drama exhibited.

"But Mrs Ward's beauty, for she was very beautiful, and feeling, tutored with the most zealous anxiety by the author and his friends, charmed and affected the audience as much, perhaps, as has ever been accomplished by the very superior actresses of aftertimes I was then a boy, but of an age to be sometimes admitted as a sort of page to the tea-drinking parties of Edinburgh. I have a perfect recollection of the strong sensation which 'Douglas' excited among its inhabitants The men talked of the rehearsals, while we are told that the ladies repeated what they had heard of the story, some had procured, as a great favour, copies of the most striking passages, which they recited at the earnest request of the company I was present at the representation, the applause was enthusiastic, but a better criterion of its merits was the tears of the audience, which the tender part of the drama drew forth unsparingly. The town," adds Dr Carlyle "(and I can vouch how truly), was in an uproar of exultation that a Scotsman should write a tragedy of the first rate, and that its merits were first submitted to them"

Many years later, in 1773, the worthy author completed a comedy, which he sent to the manager. In an unpublished letter the latter writes

"I must tell you with that frankness, friendship, and sincerity which I have always professed, that I was never more disappointed in my life, indeed, my worthy friend, if I have the least judgment in these matters, your comedy is not in the

least calculated for the stage. (He details the points of the play, etc) You have vexed and distressed me, for I see no remedy by alteration, addition, or omission which I can yet suggest."

Home replied from Kildaff

"If I was possessed with as many devils as ever haunted a jealous author (which are no small number, as you well know) I could not for one moment doubt your kindness, your friendship, or your sincerity, yet I am not convinced that the play is good for nothing" (He then proposed altering it, etc)

Nothing is clearer, both from Dr Carlyle's memoirs and Garrick's correspondence, that he was unfairly condemned for rejecting "Douglas" \*

Hume, in a ridiculous burst of extravagance, declared that the author possessed "the true theatric genius of Shakespeare and Otway, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one and the licentiousness of the other"

The sequel was that the alarm of the Calvinistic party was awakened, and the fact of the ministers having patronised a drama written by one of their body caused proceedings to be taken in the Assembly and other courts. The death of Lady Randolph was held to imply a vindication of suicide, while a solemn prayer addressed to the Almighty was an irreverence. The author was actually driven to retire from his calling.

The names of clerical dramatists that will recur to the memory seem very few. But they have been very diligent contributors to the drama Mr Sanders of Oxford has made out a list of nearly one hundred clergymen who have thus employed their pens But more singular is the number of those who have been successful These include Dr Brown (author of "Barbarossa") Dr Croly, Dr. Delap, Sir H. Bate Dudley, Dr Francis, Dr. Francklin, Dr. Hoadley, Home, Mason,

\* See also the author's "Life of Garrick," where the subject is fully treated.



Milman, Townley, and Young (author of the "Night Thoughts"). Dr Brady, of "Tate and Brady" fame, wrote a tragedy with the odd title of "The Rape of the Innocent Impostors." Dr. Dodd left unrepresented tragedies. Many, more obscure, could be named. In the year 1768, a gentleman in holy orders presented himself upon the Dublin stage as Scrub, in "The Beaux's Stratagem" of Farquhar! Walker wrote to Garrick. "We have a parson to appear in Scrub, with Mr Mossop as Archer, such an extraordinary metamorphosis will no doubt excite curiosity. The town cannot now complain that they have had no novelty, this is perhaps the greatest the stage ever knew, though it is thought the canonical gentlemen will be so scandalised as to influence a party against him, but, however it happens, it will bring one great house at least, perhaps several, and if we can but escape civil, we do not much mind ecclesiastical censure. Excommunication is not half so terrible to our state as an execution."

It has always been a problem why a land, like Scotland, abounding in poets, novelists, and humorists, should be so totally deficient in this great department of the stage, having neither dramatists nor actors to show. "Douglas" is perhaps the solitary effort, for the efforts of Thomson and others of the class are not worth considering. On the other hand, the sister isle almost abounds in dramatic wealth. For writers it can point to Farquhar, Steele, Southern, Bickerstaff, Goldsmith, Sheridan, O'Keefe, Sheridan Knowles. Of actors the list is of extraordinary richness and power. Delane, Ryan, Quin, Mrs Woffington, Mrs Clive, Mossop, Barry, Sheridan, Miss Farren, Miss Jordan, Miss O'Neill, Mrs. Glover, and many more.

Yet there is no nation so richly endowed as the Scotch—rich in poets, historians, and philosophers—but it has no literary baggage to show in the department of the stage.

There is literally no Scotch drama There are three Scotch actors This is an extraordinary deficiency in so brilliant a nation, and would seem to support Charles Lamb's not altogether fanciful theory of the literalness of the Scotchman, which would seem opposed to the pretence of mimicry or the delicate sense of innuendo or *double entendie*, on which so much of what is dramatic depends. There is indeed this piece once in such high fashion, but now never acted, but it stands alone As for actors and actresses, it is almost a complete blank The late Mr Phelps, it is believed, was of Scottish extraction, though born in England, and there have been a few local performers of Scotch characters, though, strange to say, the best expositors of such like parts have been Macklin and Cooke—two Irishmen. The Irish indeed may be envied their marvellous and undisputed supremacy in either department It will be enough to name "The Beaux's Stratagem," "The Conscious Lovers," "She Stoops to Conquer," "The Good-natured Man," "The School for Scandal," "The Rivals," and "Wild Oats" An attempt has even been made to claim Congreve, but this cannot be decently supported. It may be just subject of congratulation for natives of Ireland that three of the best comedies in the English language should have been the work of Irishmen, viz., "The Beaux's Stratagem," "She Stoops to Conquer," and "The School for Scandal." Farquhar's healthy, bold, and natural style long leavened the stage, down to the days of "The Clandestine Marriage" But the German school was soon sicklied o'er the good old English style As is well known, Goldsmith's pieces were written in protest against the Hugh Kelly sentimentals, and ran much risk of being condemned for what was thought their farcical vulgarity

One of the most enjoyable pieces of the English stage, when acted in the genuine spirit of comedy—that is, with an earnest

belief in the characters played—is “High Life below Stairs,” produced in 1759. It would be impossible to give too much praise to this bright, closely-written, and laughter-moving piece, and which holds its own beside Dickens’s admirable meeting of the Bath footmen, in “Pickwick.” Actors of our time that have performed misconceive the spirit in which it should be played, as though they were *set* to the duty of making the characters they played ridiculous. Some of the touches are admirable—the high words between “Sir Harry” and the Duke, the expressions of fashionable life, “When I and *Bob, the Bishop*, kept it up the whole night,” etc., are in the best style of comedy. It met with “the most amazing success” in London, but the more sensitive Scotch footmen created riots to put it down. They even threatened the players. The nobility and gentry, however, were so indignant at this treatment, they formed an association to put down the footmen, and bound themselves by agreement to abolish “vails.” It has been a subject of debate who was the real author of this piece, and the name of the Rev Tanner Townley, a preacher of repute, and master of Merchant Taylors’ School, has been always attached to it. I am inclined to ascribe, as it has often been ascribed, the best portions to Garrick, who, in “The Clandestine Marriage,” had shown his capacity\*.

There would appear to be no reason for concealment, as all danger would equally attend the production as the authorship. The *real* author was found in “The Spectator,” No. 88. “Falling in the other day at a victualling-house, near the House

\* Mr Dibdin, however, says that he knows that Garrick “fitted it for the stage,” and that neither Townley nor he wrote it, but Dr Hoadly and others had the chief share. On the other hand, the author of “The Biographia Dramatica” assigned the authorship of this piece absolutely to Mr Townley, of which fact the late Mr Murphy became satisfied before his death, from the testimonials of James Townley, Esq, the author’s son, and it was Mr Murphy’s intention to have corrected the fact, in a second edition of his “Life of Garrick.”

of Peers, I heard the maid come down and tell the landlady at the bar that my Lord Bishop swore he would throw her out of the window if she did not bring up more mild beer, and that my Lord Duke would have a double mug of purl." The whole play is surely there.

Few comedies have received such high praise, or been so adorned with good acting, as "The Jealous Wife," produced in 1761. Many good judges, both of his time and later, have pronounced it to be one of the best—one said the best—comedies in the language. It is founded in the school of Farquhar, and has some of his spirit, and this, it may be added, is not a difficult thing for a clever professional dramatist to acquire. With study and constant reading the ideas and associations begin to run in the same channel. Hazlitt says justly, "It is a *chef d'œuvre*, and worthy of being acted oftener and better than it is" \*

Dibdin also says

"It is one of the best comedies on the stage, thanks, however, in great measure to Garrick, for never was there an occasion where his assistance was more wanted, or rendered more honestly or more effectually. Colman was a young author, which will easily be credited, when the reader knows that 'The Musical Lady' made originally a part of 'The Jealous Wife' He had the good sense to listen to Garrick, who took great pains with the task assigned him, and in the performing it evinced great judgment and knowledge of effect. Garrick suggested the alterations, but Colman wrote the whole."

\* It was noted in this play there was a fine touch of comedy, brought out by Kemble. When the husband and wife are engaged in one of their disputes the servant enters to announce a visitor. The husband, who has been speaking with severity, suddenly changes his tone, and bids the servant show up the lady, in accents of the most perfect courtesy.

With this consensus of approbation the piece may be fairly held entitled to be deserving of such praise

On November 26th, 1761, had died that old and most successful of managers and pantomimists, Mr. John Rich, "at his house in Covent Garden Piazza," at the age of seventy-nine. He had been manager about fifty years. On his tomb was written "In him were united the various virtues that could endear him to his family, friends, and acquaintances. Distress never failed to find relief in his bounty." Hogarth has left some pleasing "family pieces" of the manager and his wife and children, grouped in a garden. But for years before his death he had become a most eccentric person, full of oddities and cultivating a sort of dialect of his own. One of these singularities consisted in giving new names and variations of names to his friends, as being more convenient to pronounce, and at the same time gratifying his whim, for he seems to have been what is called a privileged person. It is curious to find how nearly he is brought into connection with our own times. The father of the late Charles Mathews acted under Tate Wilkinson, who formed his style on Rich's, and knew him well and used to mimic him.

The manager was so pleased with his mimicry that he offered his pupil a formal engagement, and promised to *larn* him the part of the Gardener

"He took his snuff, stroaked his cat, and said, 'If I give it Muster Shuttleworth he will not let me teach him, and he is so idle. I want it perfect, Muster Williamskin, but I will larn you, muster, if you will play the part from my tuition. We were one noon hard at work with the part of the Gardener, when Mr Younger the prompter abruptly came into the room on urgent and immediate stage state affairs. Rich, perceiving him, turned hastily about, and in a rage said: 'Get away, Muster Youngmore, I am teaching Muster

Whittington to act.' I frankly told him that I was at his command for ten weeks only, whereat my old master grew angry, I turned sullen, and our interview concluded as follows —*Mr Rich* So you will not sign your article, Muster Wilkinson, and let me larn you —*Mr Wilkinson* No, sir; articles may be repented on both sides, and I would rather agree for a shorter term, and renew, if mutually agreeable. —*Mr Rich* Why, then, Muster Willamskin, what will you do? for Muster Griskin (*Mr Garnick*) told me in the summer he would never engage you again, you have offended him, muster, and he will never forgive you; and Muster Willamskin, you did not attend my theatre when summoned, and I not only made you a liberal offer, but endeavoured to be the making of you by learning you to act —*Mr Wilkinson*. My good sir, I am truly obliged to you for your offers, but must repeat, I do not relish a confined engagement. Rather than be under an article for three years I would prefer rambling for six, therefore, good sir, with my sincere thanks and wishes, unless you will agree for ten weeks, I mean to set sail in a few days for Ireland — His astonishment and answer I shall never forget; though his prophecy was not in respect to myself verified, yet I have reason to fear some adventurers possessed of too much faith in promises woefully experienced real disappointment. —*Mr Rich* (sternly) Muster Willamskin, I'll tell you what will be the consequences of your headstrong ignorance; you will go over to Dublin, and engage with the tall man, Muster Barlymore, he will promise you a large salary, of which you will not receive a second guinea; for that Muster Barlymore can wheedle a bird from the tree, and squeeze it to death in his hand\* Muster Willamskin, here is five guineas as a

\* "This was a severe caricature of Barry, but shrewd and too near a resemblance."

ticket for your Irish benefit, that you may be sure of something I wish you a good journey—your servant—He left the room in a pet”

Rich’s brother-in-law, the singer, Beard, now administered Covent Garden, but the late manager had left instructions in his will that the whole property was to be sold so soon as desirable purchasers could be found. Even at this date the old privileges had not been abolished. In September, 1763, at the bottom of a Covent Garden playbill we read this humble petition .

Whereas many complaints have been made of interruptions in the performances of the theatre occasioned by the admission of persons behind the scenes, in order to prevent the like for the future, it is humbly hoped no nobleman or gentleman will insist on a privilege so displeasing to the audience in general, whose approbation it is the duty as well as the interest of the managers to endeavour on all occasions to desire

Several years, however, were to elapse before suitable purchasers could be found.

A curious scene that took place not long before Rich’s death shows how much the performers took upon themselves, and how difficult it was to deal with them. Miss Bellamy had been lately confined in the King’s Bench prison, and used to obtain “a day rule” to go out and act, and, as it was scarcely proper that such a person should appear before the public, the name of Miss Wilford, a favourite of Mrs Rich’s, was substituted. Miss Bellamy’s name was in the bill. She says :

“At twelve o’clock I received a visit from Mr Gibson, the deputy manager, who informed me of the mistake, and requested that I would give up the part, telling me at the same

time that the managers would, upon my doing so, give out handbills to announce the error to the public I instantly replied 'I am an indulged servant of the public, and let what will happen, I will not suffer my name to be altered, but play the character I will' Mr Gibson then left me, with seeming regret, declaring I should draw upon me the hatred of the family. Upon sending my servant to look at the playbills, she brought me word that the men were at that moment changing them, and that the mistake was pointed out in a *Nota Bene* Hearing this, *I instantly sent to have handbills printed, and distributed among the audience as they went into the house* In this bill I only mentioned the circumstance which had occasioned it, simply as it was, at the same time telling them that, as I esteemed myself the acknowledged child of their favour, I thought it my duty to be ready in case I should that evening be honoured with the preference When the curtain drew up there was a universal cry for your humble servant, and upon Cordelia's appearance Miss Wilford was obliged to withdraw. Being ready dressed for the character, I immediately made my *entrée* amidst universal applause."

An undignified quarrel, that took place in 1761 between Shuter and Mrs Clive, was of course made an occasion for taking the public into confidence It was conducted, however, good-humouredly, and is entertaining enough These scenes are worth recording, also, as showing the social position of actors, though it must be remembered that their behaviour, however *outré* it may appear to our canons, was in harmony with the disorderly tone of general society.

She had written to the papers complaining of a letter from the George Coffee-house "As I have always heard it was frequented by gentlemen, it could not come from thence"



She is sure it was Shuter's "There is a malicious and wicked insinuation in his letter. He exhorts the public not to go to my benefit, because I was to have a French farce, wrote by a poor wretched author, and called 'The Island of Slaves,' and then, with great malice and art, he jumbles together some popular words, as 'French farce,' 'English liberty,' 'Island of Slaves' . . . I hope I may be indulged," she goes on, "*though a woman*, to say I have always despised the French politics, but I never yet heard we were at war with their wit," and adds, "it should not be imputed to her as a crime to have a translation produced when one part in three of the comedies now acting are taken from the French, besides those of modern authors that have sneaked into the theatres without confessing from whence they came." The lively woman goes on "It does not seem, by the style of his letter, that he is very intimately acquainted with his own language, but it is evident he knows nothing of the French."

Shuter wrote in reply, his benefit, which was on the same night as hers, "was, thanks to the indulgence of the public, as usual, a very great one, Mrs Clive's, I suppose, short of her expectations." But the truth was, he had explained the whole matter to her in private. A strangely-written letter had reached him, which, with some malice, he printed with all its faults of spelling

SIR,

I Must Desire you would Do Me the favor to let Me know if you was the auther of a letter in *The Dayle Gazetteer* relating to the New Peice I had for my benefet as it was intended to hurt my benefit and serve yours every body will Naturely conclude you was the auther if you are not assham'd of being so I suppose you will own it if you really was not concerned in wrightin it I shall be very glad for I should be

extreamly shock'd that an actor should be guilty of so base an action I dont often take the liberty of wrighting to the publick but am Now under a Nessesitty of Doing it—therefore Desier your answer.

Henrietta St.

Shuter actually went before a magistrate and swore an affidavit to the same effect, that he was not the author of the letter, and finally wrote to her that he was "her real admirer and well-wisher."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LITTLE THEATRE IN THE HAYMARKET

FROM the date of the building of Covent Garden the course of the English stage may be followed in the career of three theatres—Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the Haymarket. These were the only houses that trained companies. It is remarkable that the Haymarket had for nearly fifty years, viz, from 1720\* till 1766, lived a sort of uncertain fluctuating existence, offering shows of various kinds, operas, conjurers, dancing dogs, and monologue entertainments. But when Foote, by breaking his leg—an accident fortunate at least in its compensation—obtained a patent, through the interest of the Duke of York, there came a complete change, the place was elevated into dignity and was an institution. The patent, indeed, was curiously limited to a compromise between the new and the old contending interests, and the house could only be opened during the summer season.

\* The opening of the house was thus announced in a daily paper of December 15th, 1720 "At the New Theatre in the Haymarket, between Little Suffolk Street and James Street, which is now completely finished, will be performed a French comedy, as soon as the rest of the actors arrive from Paris, who are duly expected" The prices were, boxes and pit, 5s ; gallery, 2s 6d On the second night, the prices were altered to boxes, 4s , pit, 2s 6d , gallery, 1s 6d During some time they played four nights per week, and afterwards only two nights, till May 4th.

A history of the little theatre in the Haymarket would be an interesting one, it is associated with so many interesting events. It is curious that the old and original Haymarket Theatre should have lasted almost exactly one hundred years, viz from December, 1720, to August, 1820, when it was pulled down and the present building erected, which again was remodelled in 1880.

The glories of the old theatre are associated with the names of Foote and Colman, two remarkable men, the first, like Sheridan, being a wit as well as a writer of witty plays, and a popular performer also, just as Sheridan was a performer on another kind of stage. The Colmans, father and son, were wits as well as play-writers. It is amazing to find this prodigal distribution of gifts, now unhappily so scarce. Garrick was an actor-manager, as well as a clever play-writer, Steele, essayist as well as play-writer, Cibber, an actor-manager and play-writer, even Rich was manager, performer, and writer of pantomimes. The story of Foote has a strange interest, being dramatic to a degree; we know so much of it, too, owing to the labours of Mr Forster and Boswell, that he seems a figure of colour and flesh and blood. There was to be something tragic and yet not wholly undeserved in his end.

The accident which made Foote a patentee befell him in the month of February, 1766, when he was on a visit at Lord Mexborough's. A horse of the Duke of York's, of a vicious temper, was being spoken of, and the actor, with an absurd vanity, asserted that "though he generally preferred the luxury of a postchaise, he could ride as well as most he ever knew." He was thrown, and his leg so dreadfully shattered that it was obliged to be cut off—a terribly fatal blow for an actor. Yet, such was his spirit, that he determined to persevere, he even made jests of his infirmity. But the

duke, whose beast had caused the mischief, felt himself bound to make amends, and took the exceptional step of promising him a patent for the Haymarket. It might be thought that would have been violently resisted as an infringement on the privileges of the older patentees, but it was curiously arranged that this was only to take effect during summer, viz., from May 15th to September 15th. An unprofitable arrangement it might be thought, as audiences would, for a large portion of the time at least, be out of town. "He then purchased the lease of the premises, incorporated a house in Little Suffolk Street with the theatre, removed two shops which were in front, in the Haymarket, built a portico, increased the number of avenues, and added a second gallery to the auditory. He opened it regularly during his season, and during the remainder of the year let the theatre for various entertainments, among which were occasionally a puppet-show at noon, and an Italian fantoccini. Here abandoning his "entertainments," he entered on a series of so-called comedy quite as personal; the leading characters and incidents of which were drawn from life."

The amusing Reynolds gives us a sketch of Foote receiving the King at the door of his theatre. He makes a mistake in calling the King George the Second.

I can remember (he says) the very tone and expression he assumed when, after describing the gallantry of his corps on marching home, he exclaims, "We were all stopped and robbed by a single highwayman!" The first time that ever the King attended the Haymarket, this farce commenced the evening's performance. When His Majesty arrived at the theatre, Foote, as manager, hobbled to the stage-door to receive him; but, as he played in the first piece, instead of wearing the Court dress, usual on these occasions, he was equipped in the immense cocked hat, cumbrous boots, and

all the other paraphernalia and appurtenances of the most grotesque military uniform imaginable. The moment His Majesty cast his eyes on this extraordinary figure as he stood bowing, stumping, and wriggling with his wooden leg, he receded with astonishment, saying, "What is that man? What regiment does he belong to?"

His mania for personality seems unexampled, and was carried out persistently through his life, and in the most unscrupulous fashion. Thus, when the beautiful Miss Linley eloped with young Mr. Sheridan—the cause of much trouble to both families as well as of duels, etc. to the gentlemen—Foote seized on the incident to give it even more publicity, and brought out a piece called "The Maid of Bath." When he gave a box to Mrs. Baddeley, to grace (as he was pleased to say) his theatre

The box reserved for us was next to the stage-box, that commanded a view of the whole house, and we went. Mr. Foote performed in this play himself, it went off with *éclat*, and was well received by a crowded house. About the middle of the piece, where Mr. Foote enlarged much on the beauty of the Maid of Bath, he added "Not even the beauty of the Nine Muses, nor even that of the divine Baddeley herself, who there sits" (pointing to the box where we sat), "could exceed that of the Maid of Bath." This drew a thunder of applause from all parts of the house, he was encored and Mr. Foote repeated the words three times. Every eye was on Mrs. Baddeley, and I do not recollect ever seeing her so confused before. She rose from her seat and curtsied to the audience, and it was near a quarter of an hour before she could discontinue her obeisance, the plaudits lasting so long. This trick of Mr. Foote's put her so much to the blush, that the colour did not leave her face the whole evening.

With this may be compared another of these free-and-easy

appeals, made, many years later, by a free *comique*, to the audience.

One night (says Reynolds) while I was sitting in the front row of the balcony-box at the Haymarket, during the performance of "The Son-in-Law," in the excellent scene of equivocation between Cranky and Bowkit, when the former, after making objection to the other's offer to marry his daughter, observes "Besides, you are such an ugly fellow!" "Ugly," repeated Edwin, who played Bowkit, "ugly!" then coolly advancing towards the lamps he cried "Now, I submit to the decision of an enlightened British public, which is the ugliest fellow of the *three*—I, Old Cranky, or" (he continued, pointing to me) "*that gentleman in the front row of the balcony-box?*" Aroused by this appeal, I suddenly found myself changed from a state of peaceful privacy into the object of the laughter, scrutiny, and pointing fingers of two-thirds of the audience.

Foote's pieces are not dramas, and have neither story nor situations. "The Trip to Calais," for instance, which caused him such trouble, is unmeaning, save as a reproduction of an incident that had occurred. A father and mother go over to Calais after their runaway daughter, who is sheltered in a convent, whence she declines to come forth. Lady Kitty Crocodile, the Duchess of Kingston, then proposes to take her to live with her as companion in Calais, with which plan the parents are delighted. Most of Foote's stories are of this newspaper kind. He had evidently first conceived some droll characters, fitted them out with quaint sayings and speeches, but gave them nothing to do. There is a character in one of Foote's plays whose treatment and development show that the author belongs to the true school of wit. Given the problem of dealing with some discursive, tedious old man, rambling from topic to topic, it could not be treated in more lively or amusing style.

Says Mr Aircastle to his lady Convinced me! Did I not tell you what Parson Prunello said—I remember Mrs Lightfoot was by—she had been brought to bed, that day was a month, of a very fine boy—a bad birth, for Doctor Seeton, who served his time with Luke Lancet of Guise’s—there was a talk about him and Nancy the daughter—she afterwards married Will Whitlow, another apprentice, who had great expectations from an old uncle in the Grenades; but he left all to a distant relation, Kit Cable, a midshipman aboard the *Torbay*—she was lost, coming home in the Channel—the captain was taken up by a coaster from Rye, loaded with cheese——

*Mrs* *Air* Mercy upon me, Mr. Aircastle, at what a rate you run on! What has all this to do with our coming to London?

*Air* Why, I was going to tell you; but you will never have patience!

And again

*Air* I told her so, Mr Flaw Zounds, says I, you treat the boy as if he were a white bear or an ostrich—though it is quite a mistake, Mr Flaw, that those creatures eat non I saw one once at the Checquer at Salisbury—the keeper’s name was Evan Thomas, a Welshman—he had but one hand—he lost the other endeavouring to steal a piece of cheese out of a rat-trap—the trap went down, and——

*Mrs Air* Did ever mortal see such a man?

*Air* And, zounds, why must not I speak? She likes to listen to no sounds but her own, but I will be heard, and——

*Mrs Air* And so you shall, when you talk to the purpose.

*Air* Purpose, madam! D—— it, I would have you to know——

*Flaw* Oh, fy, fy, good people! curb your cholers a little. Consider you are not now in the country

*Air* Well, well, I am calm

In 1768, the now successful Garrick, finding, after sixteen years, that his attractions had begun to fail a little, resolved to undertake a tour abroad, and accordingly set off for France



and Italy, in which countries he was treated with much distinction. On his return in 1765, having talked with Clairon and seen all the great theatres, he determined on introducing quite a novelty in the mode of lighting the stage\* "We hear," said one of the journals in September, "that the managers of Drury Lane Theatre will endeavour to light the stage this season without the branches, which have been thought a very great obstruction to the entertainment of the spectators. It is said that this change is now made." Before this, in 1762, the theatre had been altered by lengthening the stage, enlarging the boxes and pit by taking in one of the lobbies, rebuilding the galleries, and forming the steps on each side into "Green Boxes." This was one of the patchings the old house was to undergo before it was taken down.

This new lighting was the modern footlights, and to Garrick certainly belongs the credit of originating this reform. It will be noted that it was recommended on the ground of its being less of an obstruction, but indeed, as a matter of scenic effect, it is a distinct retrogression, for the light, thrown upwards, casts the shadows on the face in wrong places, and renders the features harsh†. To this day, however, this rude mode has held its ground. There is need of a device more scientific.

About 1760, an observer pointed out the want of propriety and order in the regulation of the scenes. "The scene-shifters often present us with dull clouds hanging in a lady's dressing-room, trees intermingled with the disunited portions of a portico, a vaulted roof unsupported. Sometimes King Richard's troops appear in the uniforms of the soldiers in St. James's

\* The stage and scenery were lit by three hundred patent lamps, and the "spectatory" by two hundred and seventy wax candles.

† In the author's work, "The World behind the Scenes," this matter is investigated.

Park with short jackets and cocked-up hats. King Richard, indeed, wears the dress of his time, but not so Richmond; while the bishop is stiffened into reformers' lawn sleeves, with trencher-cap and tassel. Again, it is equally ridiculous to behold the actors making their entrances through plastered walls and wainscots instead of through doors." This objection, however, opens up the whole question of scenic delusion. I firmly believe that the present system of enclosing the stage, presenting the copy of an actual room, with ceiling, doors, etc., is fatal to illusion. The more general the scenery the better for this end, it should be rather an indication of what is intended, so as to convey a haziness, for the more complete the imitation of real things the less delusion there is. The old mode of entrance from "the wing" seems to make the boundary between the world off the stage and that on it suitably indistinct, the actor seems to *enter on the scene*—not to come in through a canvas door. But it would take too long to develop these principles here.

It has been mentioned that, during Garrick's absence, Powell, a young actor, had made an extraordinary impression, and, to the manager's uneasiness, was put forward as a sort of rival. There was no serious danger however; but he was good-looking, popular, and interesting, and soon found great patrons. Accordingly, when it was known that Beard was tired of administering Covent Garden and purveying operas, and was willing to dispose of the patent, he was thought of as a suitable person to have a share in the new management. Two others were presently found. Garrick was deeply wounded at finding the actor he had trained and counselled at his house, and the friend, Colman, with whom he had written a play, proposing to oppose him.

Beard's influence with his father-in-law had been exerted in favour of operas, in which his fine voice could be exerted.

"The Beggar's Opera," "The Jovial Crew," "Comus," "The Chaplet," etc. These were alternated with pantomimes and shows, such as "The Coronation," during the run of which the old manager had died

The theatre was left nominally to be carried on by Beard, but was really bequeathed to Mrs Beard, Mrs Bencroft, and Mrs. Morris, the three daughters. The singing element was further developed, and an opportunity was taken now to bring forward an Italian opera, the work, however, of an English composer, Arne, whose "Artaxerxes," based on Italian models, did credit to the country. His name, however, will ever be associated with that well-known and spirited anthem, "Rule Britannia." This course was found very profitable, especially as the interest in Drury Lane had begun to diminish sensibly, and it was proved by the large sum—60,000*l*—presently to be received for the undertaking.

The value of the property was then considered to be 60,000*l*, subject to a ground-rent of 300*l*. At this price, in 1767, Colman, Harris, Powell, the actor, and Rutherford, purchased the concern from Rich's heirs, each having a quarter share, but after some disputes, the chief interest passed to Harris, who held seven-twelfths, Powell holding the remainder. Harris later disposed of a sixth to Mr. John Kemble. For this the latter paid the enormous sum of 22,000*l*, which rated the value of the whole at 132,000*l*. He, however, only paid down 10,000*l* in cash, leaving his profits on the rest to accumulate. The share of Powell became vested in his three daughters, one of these married an eccentric Dr. Fisher,\* a musician. Of the other sisters, one married a Mr. Warren, and on his death, Mr. Martindale, who kept

\* Of this Fisher, Kelly says "I have heard Moody say that he came one evening into the green-room, when he was present, and abused an actress for having torn her petticoat, and when questioned by her as to his right to do so, he replied, with great pomposity, 'All the right in the world, madam, I

a gaming clubhouse at St. James's When she was left a widow for the second time, she bequeathed her share to Mr Const, the well-known magistrate There was a third sister, who married a Mr White, one of the clerks in the House of Commons, and Mr. Willett, and Captain Forbes, marrying her two daughters, became entitled to represent her share The Powell interest was therefore at last represented by Messrs Const, Willett and Forbes, Dr Fisher having disposed of the other daughter's share, a sixteenth.

It is not generally known that about the time Covent Garden Theatre was changing hands a plan was on foot for disposing of Drury Lane. Garrick and his partner had almost concluded a treaty by which George Garrick was to hold his brother's share, and King and Holland the other moiety But at the last moment Lacy declined to go on with the matter. This was in 1767

It was indeed to be a year of industry for Drury Lane, as during the fifty-seven nights no less than thirty-four new pieces had been brought out

When the new composite management of Covent Garden was formed, consisting of Colman, a dramatist; Powell, an actor, Rutherford and Harris, it might have been predicted that out of such elements some discordance was likely to arise The manager of Drury Lane was hurt at this coalition, as one of his own authors and friends, and the actor whose reputation his theatre had made, leagued themselves against him To add to the unpleasant look of the transaction, Colman had a violent dispute with him as to their respective shares in "The Clandestine Marriage" Yet Garrick said handsomely that

have to look after my own property, for know, madam, the sixteenth part of the petticoat which you have destroyed belongs to me, and is mine, to all intents and purposes' When his wife died, he parted with his share, to the great joy of the other partners in the concern "

this very ground cleared him from blame But Powell, he said, was "a scoundrel," and Colman would repent ever having joined with him

This young actor, though he may have seemed ungrateful, scarcely deserved such an epithet, for on the stage, of all places in the world, gratitude, from the conditions of the scene, is difficult to hope for or to find. The reputation that one makes is so much abstracted from a rival, as all "live to please," and pleasing regulates profit, but too often gratitude can only be exercised at the sacrifice of profit Powell was a young clerk in a counting-house, and had made his *début* in October, 1763 \* Of this alliance it was related

"Harris and Rutherford had conceived the idea of taking the theatre, and proposed to invite some third person of ability and experience in theatrical affairs to join with them in the purchase. They therefore thought of Powell. He urged taking Mr. Colman as a fourth, to which the others were at first averse, but afterwards, in consideration of Mr. Colman's talents as a dramatic writer and his known familiar intercourse with the stage, they consented. By articles dated March 31st, 1767, Harris and Rutherford were empowered to make the purchase, on the joint account of all four, at 60,000*l*, the parties to be jointly and equally concerned in the management When, in pursuance of this agreement, the contract was made with Mr. Rich's executors, the parties met to settle the form of articles between them, but to the surprise of Harris and Rutherford, Colman proposed that he himself should be invested with the entire management Though they wished to take active part in the management themselves, it was agreed that Mr. Colman should have 'the power of

\* He had proceeded from piece to piece and success to success with this financial result at the end of the season receipts, 29,023*l* 9*s* 6*d*, expenses, 22,488*l* 8*s* 6*d*; leaving a profit of 6535*l* 1*s*

engaging and dismissing performers, of receiving and rejecting new pieces, of casting plays, of appointing what exhibitions should be performed, and of conducting all such things as are generally understood to be comprehended in the dramatic and theatrical province, but that he should, however, communicate and submit his conduct to Messrs Harris and Rutherford, and, in case they should signify their disapprobation thereof in writing, the measure so disapproved should not be carried into execution.' It was also, by a subsequent writing, mutually agreed between the parties, 'that Mr Powell should have for seven years 400*l* per annum and a clear benefit, but that if any other performer should be engaged at a larger salary, then such addition should be made to the salary of Mr Powell as would exceed the salary of such other performer' "

On the 1st of July the purchase-money was paid, and Mr Powell having only personal security to offer for the sum, he was, on this occasion, obliged to borrow Mr. Harris agreed to give the lender real security of his own On the other hand, a nobleman is said to have helped him The complaints they made of the treatment they underwent are rather of a petulant kind—that Colman did not properly introduce all the principal actors to his brother-patentees, but, on their first appearance at the theatre, he being seated on the middle of the stage, he petulantly desired them to withdraw, lest they should interrupt the rehearsal

"Though he had engaged to submit his conduct to Messrs Harris and Rutherford, he soon grew impatient even of the appearance of control, and though, after much expostulation, he assented to a weekly meeting for advising about the business of the theatre, it lasted only a few weeks, nor was it of any effect while it did last, as he neither would lay open his whole plan, to know the opinion of his colleagues, nor act in

conformity when he did know it On the 29th of October, he openly disclaimed their right to lay him under any restraint, and declared, in positive terms, that he would never disclose to them any of his future intentions, but would be responsible to the public only. On his own authority and without their knowledge or consent, he engaged Mr and Mrs Yates, Mr Yates at 10*l* a week, with a benefit, and Mrs Yates at 500*l* a season, with a benefit, notwithstanding, in a consultation held a few days before on the subject, it had been unanimously agreed this should not be done"

Mr. Colman having inserted a few lines in "The Rehearsal," and intended an alteration of "King Lear," proposed to take between 60*l* and 70*l* out of the treasurer's hands on that account, and, not being opposed, did take out such sum. Some time afterwards, when he was required by Messrs Harris and Rutherford to produce the play, with the alterations, or repay the money, he did not think proper to do either.

Soon it came to an open disagreement, and they joined issue on the production of a play.

To George Colman, Esq.

SIR,

We absolutely disapprove the performance of "Cymbeline" at our theatre till further consideration

T. HARRIS, I. RUTHERFORD

December 30th, 1767.

About an hour afterwards they received the following

GENTLEMEN,

I have received your mandate, and will print it, as a reason to the public for performing no play to-morrow

GEO. COLMAN.

GENTLEMEN,

Great part of our boxes being taken for the play of "Cymbeline," great damage must accrue to my property by your method of proceeding, and I must appeal to my friends and the public for redress. I most sincerely concur with Mr Colman's sentiments above, and shall abide by his determination.

I am, your humble Servant,

W. POWELL

To prevent the theatre from being shut up, Messrs Harris and Rutherford sent the following notice to Mr Colman :

To George Colman, Esq.

SIR,

If you refuse to give directions for a play to-morrow night, we shall. Whether they will be obeyed or not is for future consideration. What you are pleased to call our mandate can be no reason for shutting up the theatre, as you have the whole circle of the drama ("Cymbeline" excepted) from whence to elect the play. Whatever damages may arise, we doubt not, will be at your peril, as they can only ensue from your committing a breach of the most solemn and legal engagements.

We are your humble Servants.

"Mr. Colman, though he abandoned the theatre on this occasion, left Mr Powell to give out the play in dispute, which was accordingly acted on the 31st of December, in open defiance of Messrs. Harris and Rutherford, and in direct breach of the articles between the parties.

"Messrs Harris and Rutherford now thought it absolutely necessary to audit the accounts of the theatre and inquire into the state of the wardrobe. They therefore ordered the treasurer to prepare his accounts, and desired Mrs Powell, by letter, to send whatever was in her possession to the wardrobe-keeper's office. Mr Powell answered, by letter, that this requisition could not be complied with, the unappropriated cloaths of the theatre having ever been kept out of the house, under the care of one of the proprietors."



This did not promise well. The behaviour of Colman appears a little high-handed, but it is evident that he conceived that he and his colleague knew more about the stage than his financial partners. The Court of Chancery had to be invoked to settle the rights of the parties. But the chief quarrel was in reference to the claims of Mrs. Yates and Mrs. Lessingham, Colman being naturally in favour of the former.

In the law proceedings the following incidents of theatrical life were formally scheduled

March 31st, 1767 Articles of agreement between Thomas Harris, Esq., first part, John Rutherford, Esq., second part, George Colman, Esq., third part, and Wilham Powell, Esq., fourth part, stating that Messrs Harris and Rutherford were in treaty for the purchase of two patents and everything belonging to Covent Garden Theatre, from Mrs. Pissilla Rich, and that the whole was purchased for 60,000*l*. In May, 1767, Mr Colman was appointed manager, under certain restrictions. He was to communicate and submit his conduct to Messrs Harris and Rutherford, and if they disapproved of his measures they were to be discontinued. On July the 1st, 1768, the contract with Mrs Rich was completed. Mr Colman, in a very short time after, acted in the management of the theatre without consulting his partners. At length, in June, 1769, Mr Colman thought proper to exclude the partners from the house, all the windows and doors were barricaded, and Mr Charles Sarjant and Mr Flight, housekeeper and assistant-housekeeper, were, in Mr Colman's name, to keep possession of the theatre. Messrs Harris and Rutherford, having been refused admittance, had recourse to force. They turned out Mr Sarjant and his assistants, ordering at the same time admittance to Mr Colman and Mr Powell. Messrs Harris and Rutherford kept possession for a few days, when a justice of the peace was found hardy enough to dispossess them, and restored Mr Sarjant, who literally was no more than their servant and housekeeper. More violence was followed up on the part of Sarjant. Two schedules were given in evidence to show that the performers were paid without their consent during the years 1768, 1769, and 1770.

This shows on what a splendid scale a grand theatre was conducted.

A list of performers, etc at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden, with their salaries per diem, 14th September, 1767

Actors—per day Messrs Powell, 2*l* 15*s* , Woodward, 2*l* 15*s* , Smith, 2*l* , Shuter, 2*l* , Yates, Dyer, 1*l*. 1*s* 8*d* , Clarke, 1*l* , Dunstall, 1*l* , Gibson, 1*l* , Bensley, 16*s* 8*d* , Barrington, 11*s* , Hull, 10*s* , Davis, 8*s* 4*d* , Morris, 8*s* 4*d* , Casey, 5*s* , Cushing, 6*s* 8*d* , Bennet, 6*s* 8*d* , Holton, 6*s* 8*d* , Perry, 6*s* 8*d* , R Smith, 6*s* 8*d* , Gardner, 6*s* 8*d* , Weller, 6*s*. 8*d* , T. Smith, 5*s* , Wignell, 5*s*. , Le Lewes, 5*s* , Redman, 4*s* 2*d*. , Bates, 3*s* 4*d* , Quick, 5*s* , Mozeen, 3*s* 4*d* , Morgan, 3*s* 4*d* , Massey, 3*s* 4*d* , Stoppelear, 3*s* 4*d* , Hallam, 3*s* 4*d* , C Smith, 2*s* 6*d* , Wylde, 2*s* 6*d* , Bamford, 3*s* 4*d*

Men Singers—per day Messrs. Mattocks, 1*l* 3*s* 4*d* , Squib, 1*l* , Dibdin, 10*s* , Du Bellamy, 10*s* , Baker, 6*s* 8*d* , Legg, 5*s* , Mahoon, 10*s*.

Men Dancers—per day Messrs. Fishar, 1*l* , Larivier, 16*s* 8*d* , Miles, 13*s* 4*d* , Aldridge, 13*s* 4*d* , Arnold Fishar, 6*s* 8*d* , Settree, 5*s* , Dumay, 5*s* , Hussey, 5*s* , Pedro, 5*s* ; Curtal, 5*s* , Banks, 5*s* , Rayner, 4*s* 2*d*. , King, 4*s* 2*d*. ; Merryfield, 4*s* 2*d* , Blurton, 3*s* 4*d*

Prompters—per day Messrs Younger, 13*s* 4*d* , Bryan, 3*s*. 4*d* , Stede, 3*s* 4*d*

Music—per day . Messrs. Simpson, 10*s* 6*d*. , Bumgarton, 10*s* 6*d* , Miller, 10*s* 6*d*. , Wood, 6*s* 8*d* ; Buckley, 6*s* 8*d* , Foulis, 6*s* 3*d* , Jones, 5*s* 10*d* , Grey, 5*s*. , Gillier, 5*s* , Rich, 5*s* , Muller, 5*s* , Long, 5*s* , Vincent, 5*s* , Donwalt, 5*s* , Real, 5*s* , Beaumont, 5*s* , Linnicke, 5*s* ; Lowe, 5*s* , Blanc, 5*s* , Scoval, 4*s* 7*d*. , Sargant, 4*s*. 2*d*. , Heron, 4*s* 2*d* , Payne, 3*s* 4*d* , Goodman, 1*s*. 8*d*

Actresses—per day Mesd Yates, Bellamy, 1*l* 13*s* 4*d* , Macklin, 1*l* 3*s* 4*d* , Buckley, 1*l* 3*s* 4*d* ; Lessingham, Ward, 1*l* , Ward, Miss ; Vincent, 13*s* 4*d* ; Green, 10*s* , Pitt, 10*s* , Dyer, 6*s* 8*d* , Barrington, 6*s* 8*d* , Gardner, 5*s*. , Ogilvie, 5*s* , Stevens, 5*s* , Helme, 4*s* 2*d*. , Evans, 3*s* 4*d* , Pearse, 3*s* 4*d* , Mills, 3*s* 4*d* , Ford, 3*s* 4*d* ; Copen, 3*s* 4*d* ; Cockayne, 3*s* 4*d* , Ferguson, 3*s* 4*d* , White, 3*s* 4*d* , Du Bellamy, 3*s*. 4*d* ; Weller, 3*s*. 4*d* , Perry, 3*s*. 4*d* ; Davis,

3s. 4d., Parfett, 6s. 8d, Allen, 3s 4d. With six Women Singers and eleven Women Dancers.

Total—Actors, 35 21l 1s 10d, Men Singers, 7 3l 15s, Men Dancers, 15 5l 15s 10d, Prompters, 3 1l, Actresses, 29 10l. 2s 6d; Women Singers, 6 5l 3s 4d, Women Dancers, 11 3l. 5s 10d, Servants, etc, 50 13l 5s The total making 63l

The reader will be interested at seeing how an author's "three nights" and its charges were arranged.

Saturday, February 29th, 1772—"Grecian Daughter" and "Lottery" Boxes, 124l 12s 6d; pit, 51l 7s 6d, first gallery, 60l 11s, second gallery, 16l. Cash, 252l 11s. Charges, 73l 10s Balance, 179l 1s

Monday, March 9th, 1772—"Grecian Daughter" and "Devil to Pay" Boxes, 130l 2s 6d, pit, 53l 14s, first gallery, 61l 6s, second gallery, 19l 6s Cash, 264l 8s 6d Charges, 73l 10s Balance, 190l 18s 6d

Monday, March 16th, 1772—"Grecian Daughter" and "Absent Man" Boxes, 128l 10s, pit, 51l 18s, first gallery, 64l 10s; second gallery, 19l 19s 6d Cash, 264l 17s 6d Charges, 73l 10s Balance, 191l 7s 6d

Account of after money February 29th, 3l 10s 6d; March 9th, 1l 13s 6d, March 16th, 2l 15s 6d Total, 7l 19s 6d

First, 179l 1s, second, 190l 18s 6d, third, 191l 7s 6d; after money, 7l 19s 6d April 4th, received, 569l 6s 6d

First benefit, 252l 11s, after money, 3l 10s 6d Total, 256l 1s 6d. Second benefit,\* 264l 8s 6d, after money, 1l 13s 6d. Total, 266l 2s Third benefit, 264l 17s 6d., after money, 2l 15s 6d Total, 267l 13s First, 256l 1s 6d, second, 266l 2s; third, 267l 13s Total, in three nights, 789l 16s 6d

Mrs Lessingham was an inferior actress, but of great beauty, who had an extraordinary career in connection with Derrick, who also had a singular story.\* One of the managers was interested in this lady, and hence the dispute No less than

\* Told in J Taylor's curious "Records"

four pamphlets were issued, full of recrimination and details, entitled, "True State," "The Difference," etc Harris at last sent a challenge to Colman in this form "You are welcome to my life if you dare anyhow to hazard the taking of it!" To which Colman replied "As to my daring to take your life, God knows I dare not do it, but you and every other man shall find that I dare on all occasions to defend my own" The young Powell, however, was cut off in his prime in 1769, leaving a family, of whom a pleasing picture hangs in the Garrick Club Not until 1771 were the contending managers reconciled at a formal dinner at Colman's

Miss Bellamy, who was at this time engaged at the house, gives us some curious pictures of the life behind the scenes during this distracted reign This extraordinary woman, ever the cause of confusion and trouble at the theatres, having some grievances against Mr John Calcraft, a well-known character, had announced a pamphlet in which she was to expose him

Just before the play began, Colman came to my dressing-room and informed me that, in consequence of my advertisement, Mr Calcraft had been at his house vowing vengeance against the theatre if I did not promise to give up all thoughts of such a publication, which, he said, was at once putting a dagger into his heart and a pistol to his head He concluded, with many imprecations, that, if I did not at least give some time, he would not only put his threats into execution, but apply to the Lord Chamberlain to have me silenced

Colman, urging on her "that she was playing under a later licence from the Bankrupt Commissioners," prevailed on her to postpone publication

She also describes how the managers drew the actors into the quarrel, Mr Colman taking round a paper to be signed, adopting him as director, and expressing approbation of his conduct.

Mr Colman was scarcely gone before Mr. Rutherford and Mr Woodward came in, and, I have some reason to think, on the same business, as the former immediately exclaimed, "Have you signed it?" Upon my answering in the negative, but acknowledging that the paper was left with me for my consideration, Mr Rutherford wanted me to show it to him. This I absolutely refused to do, saying, I wondered any gentleman who professed liberal sentiments could advise a breach of trust. He told me that, if he had got hold of it, he would have burnt it, as he was sure two capital performers had signed it, who would not have done so had another paper been presented in their favour.

We have here, too, a sketch of the eccentric patronesses of "The Beggar's Opera," whom we have met before.

At length the day of my benefit came. The Douglas cause was decided that day in their favour, to the very great mortification of the house of Hamilton. When my two patronesses appeared the applause was great, but, upon the young gentleman's entering, it increased, and the Duchess of Douglas, making more courtesies upon the occasion than her companion thought needful, she leaned over the young gentleman who sat between them, and cried out, "Sit down, Peg!" This had such an effect upon me, who stood on the same side ready to make my appearance, that I burst into such a fit of laughter as prevented me from going on immediately, as I ought to have done. But this was not all. Her grace being in high good-humour, she kept calling out, occasionally loud enough for me to hear, "Well said, Mary!" "Bravo, Mary!" which, united with the former, was very near turning the said story we were enacting into a tragi-comedy; for it was with the greatest difficulty I could keep my risible faculties in any decorum.

The quarrels between the managers were further inflamed by the presence of a stormy personage, who generally brought contention with him. This was Macklin, who at once took part against Colman, joining with gusto in the fray, and, it was said, drawing up the bills in Chancery himself. His cause of dislike was the treatment of his daughter, who had

declined a part for not having time given her to study it. The following might find a place in a novel, or have come from the pen of Captain Costigan

SIR,

I have been informed that, upon receipt of Miss Macklin's note on Wednesday night, you concluded that it was a note of evasion, and calculated to distress you, and to obstruct the business of Covent Garden Theatre.

And I am likewise informed that, the next day, in a spirit of high indignation, you publicly read her note in Mr Griffin's, the bookseller shop, in Catherine Street, and at the same time made this remarkable comment on it "That it was evasive and jesuitical, and calculated to injure the play, and that I was privy to and advising in the measure"

The disagreements among the proprietors of Covent Garden have turned that theatre *into a den of faction and a forge of falsehood* I do not suppose that the managers or actors of St Stephen's Chapel, in the most factious and corrupt era, ever produced more slander and falsehood than the theatre of Covent Garden has caused during the short period of your management, or a more malignant spirit, or a greater liar, than the person who writes "The Theatrical Monitor," as I hope to prove in the course of this inquiry, and I must add that, as far as positive evidence and unforced deductions lead to truth, Mr Colman and Mr Powell, on this and many occasions relative to me, *have been the forgers and propagators of much untruth*

But the special accounts of these ingenious forgeries *shall, in proper time and place, be laid before the public* At present, sir, I mean to confine my inquiry only to a scandalous report, relative to your conduct towards Miss Macklin and me about "Cyrus"

## CHAPTER VII.

GOLDSMITH.

THE year 1765 was remarkable for the foundation of a great benefit society for actors, who, when grown old or otherwise unable to pursue their profession, might reckon on an honourable means of support, which they had purchased, as it were, by contributions made in the more flourishing times. Mrs Hamilton, a well-known actress, had fallen into a piteous state, and had become literally destitute in the prime of life, and this discovery seemed to have caused universal alarm in the profession. Mr. Thomas Hull, a worthy actor and an officer of Covent Garden, seized the opportunity to propose a scheme, the chief points of which were that it should be confined to the Covent Garden players, that sixpence a week should be contributed, subscriptions invited, and an annual benefit secured. In this way a fund was gathered. When Mr Garrick returned from abroad and found this step had been taken without consulting him, he was exceedingly angry and much mortified, as it seemed a slight to one who was admitted to be the head of his profession.

This institution (said Mathews, in a pleasant speech at one of the dinners) had been founded in the year 1765, and there had been at various times since a dispute as to "who was

the founder." Some said that Mattocks was the founder, others that it was Mr Hull. There had been a kind of what he (Mr Mathews) would term an amiable dispute amongst the relatives and admirers of Messrs Hull, Mattocks, and the celebrated Garrick, with whom the idea of a theatrical fund originated. The Covent Garden institution certainly was founded by the two former. Each claimed the merit of the suggestion, and on application for an Act of Parliament they ran a race for the prize—it was nearly a "dead heat," but Garrick won by gaining the Act of Parliament before Covent Garden. However, from that year up to the year 1815 the society had been supported by the actors, occasionally assisted by other contributors. Fawcett (he added) established the dinners.

Being mollified, however, Garrick consented to set on foot a similar institution for his own theatre, which was done in 1766. He entered into the scheme with extraordinary ardour, gave it an annual benefit, performed for it himself, and, as it was calculated, added to its funds by his own hearty exertions no less a sum than 4500*l*—an instance of co-operation truly magnificent. In May, 1776, when both funds obtained an Act of Parliament, he defrayed the expenses of that for Drury Lane. It was obvious that these two institutions were based on the principle that every actor, to gain its advantages, must be connected for a long term of years with the respective theatres, and this again implied in the latter a regular perseverance and prosperity. This, unfortunately, could not be guaranteed. With the beginning of the century began the growth of the minor theatres, and actors, instead of rising from the ranks in a sort of meritorious progression, began to fall away in search of higher salaries. In this way the supporters became scattered, though the funds were slowly accumulating. It was accordingly felt that the basis should be widened, the whole remodelled, and the *local* restriction abolished. Accordingly, in 1838, the General Theatrical Fund (afterwards "Royal") was established by a union of the two



old ones, Sheridan Knowles and Elton taking an important part in the transaction. By the new rules the benefits were extended to singers and dancers and prompters, who had practised five years, seven years' subscriptions were necessary before receiving the benefit. A subscriber of twenty-one, who paid about 4*s*, 8*s*., or 12*s*., should become entitled to 40*l*, 80*l*, or 120*l* annuities, according to the class, up to the age of fifty-three and upwards, when the payments of 2*l*. 7*s* 5*d*, 4*l* 14*s* 10*d*, and 7*l* 2*s*. 3*d* respectively were necessary to secure the same annuities. If, however, the annuitants were in receipt, from other sources, of means from 90*l* to 140*l*. a year, they were not entitled to receive anything from the fund. In 1853, a charter of incorporation was obtained. In 1791, the stock of the fund stood at 6050*l*, the receipts at Drury Lane were 695*l* 6*s* 2½*d*, and the expenditure 585*l* 14*s* 3*d*. In 1881, at the dinner, when Mr Irving took the chair, the stock was 1330*l*. and the expenditure was 1741*l*. the receipts being supplemented by dinners and donations. I possess an almost complete series of the reports from the very first year, with the notes of the secretaries for toasts and suggestions to the Duke of York. I find the following among these papers. The following memorandums as to theatrical dinners were received from the secretaries of each fund named, taken from their books.

The *first* Covent Garden Theatrical Fund Dinner took place at Freemasons' Hall, January 30th, 1816. The Duke of York took the chair, supported by the Dukes of Sussex and Kent, etc.

The *last* dinner of the Covent Garden Theatrical Fund took place on May 26th, 1847, the Duke of Cambridge in the chair. The *first time ladies sang* at C. G. T. F. dinners was in 1824 or 1825, when Miss Paton, Miss Stephens, and Miss Love sang.

(Signed) DRINKWATER MEADOWS, Secretary of  
C. G. T. Fund

To John Povey.

May 17th, 1853.

The Drury Lane Theatrical Fund, founded by the late David Garrick, in the year 1766, for the relief and support of indigent and decayed members of Her Majesty's Company of Comedians, subscribers to the same, their widows and children Incorporated by Act of Parliament, 1775 JOHN PRITT HARLEY, Esq, Master and Treasurer, WILLIAM BENNETT, Secretary

To your first question of "How many dinners the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund has had?" I beg to say that the *first* took place on March 11th, 1818, at the London Tavern, the Duke of York in the chair The *last* dinner took place on the 28th May, 1851, at the Freemasons' Hall The first time a lady ever sang at a Theatrical Fund dinner was at Drury Lane T F in 1820 and 1821, and that lady was your sister, Miss Povey, who sang "Echo song from 'Comus'"

#### AN ACT

*For the better securing a Fund, belonging to certain persons of the Theatre Royal, in Drury Lane, applicable to charitable uses, and for other purposes herein mentioned*

WHEREAS, in or about the year One thousand seven hundred and sixty-six, a contribution was begun at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, towards the charitable purpose of establishing a fund for the support of such performers belonging to the said theatre, as through age, infirmity, or accident should be obliged to retire from the stage, the managers of which charity have since extended the same to the occasional relief of performers in case of sickness, and also to the relief and support of the widows and children of deceased performers belonging to the said theatre AND WHEREAS, by the profits arising from several plays, acted for the benefit of the said charity, and the voluntary contributions of the performers belonging to the said company, and other persons, a fund to the amount of four thousand pounds, or thereabouts, is now in the hands of certain trustees applicable to the purposes aforesaid To THE END THEREFORE, that the money contributed as aforesaid, or which may hereafter be contributed, towards increasing the said fund, may be applied to the purposes

aforesaid, and to prevent, as far as may be, any misapplication or embezzlement thereof,—

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

THAT IT MAY BE ENACTED, AND BE IT ENACTED, by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by authority of the same, that, from and after the passing of this Act, all and every the subscribers to the said fund for the time being, during such time as he, she, and they respectively shall pay to the same, shall be, and are hereby declared to be, one body corporate and politic, in deed and in name, and shall be called by the name of "The Society established for the Relief of Indigent Persons belonging to His Majesty's Company of Comedians of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane," and by the same name they shall have perpetual succession and a common seal, and that they and their successors, by the same name, may sue and be sued, implead and be impleaded, answer and be answered unto, in all or any court or courts of record, and places of judicature within this kingdom of Great Britain, and that they, and their successors, by the name aforesaid, shall be able and capable in law, to have, hold, receive, enjoy, possess, and retain, for the purposes aforesaid, all and every such sum and sums of money as have been paid, given, devised, or bequeathed, or shall at any time or times hereafter be paid, given, devised or bequeathed, to and for the ends and purposes herein before mentioned And that they, and their successors, by the name aforesaid, shall and may, at any time hereafter, without licence in mortmain, purchase, take, or receive, hold, and enjoy, any lands, tenements, or hereditaments, not exceeding the yearly value of five hundred pounds AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that, from and after the passing of this Act, Thomas King, John Packer, John Moody, James Aickin, James William Dodd, Robert Baddeley, Francis Waldron, Richard Hurst, William Brereton, James Wrighton, William Parsons, John Palmer, and William Davis, shall be, and they are hereby appointed, directors for managing the said fund, until the fifth day of April, which shall be in the year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and seventy-

seven And that the said directors and their successors, to be elected in manner hereinafter mentioned, or the majority of such directors for the time being, shall have full power and authority, from time to time, to dispose of the said common seal, and to alter or make new the same, and to direct the use and application thereof, and to make, ordain, and constitute such and so many bye-laws, constitutions, orders, and regulations as to them, or the major part of them, shall seem necessary and convenient for the appropriation of the said fund, or touching, or in any wise concerning, the affairs and business of the said corporation And the same bye-laws, constitutions, orders, and regulations so made to put in use and enforce accordingly, and at their will and pleasure to revoke, change, and alter the same or any of them, which said bye-laws, constitutions, orders and regulations so as aforesaid made shall be duly kept and observed by the corporation, and every member thereof, provided the same be reasonable, and not contrary or repugnant to the statutes, customs, or laws of this kingdom, or the true intent and meaning of this Act AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that the said directors may, and are hereby empowered to appoint a treasurer or treasurers, and such other officers as they shall think necessary for the purposes of this Act, and shall and are hereby required to take such security from their treasurer or treasurers as a majority of the said directors shall think proper AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that such subscribers to the said fund, as may hereafter be entitled to receive any benefit therefrom, shall meet together, at some convenient place in or near the said theatre, on the 25th day of March, which shall be in the year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven, or within ten days after, for electing directors for the year ensuing, and that previous to such election the names of all the directors for the time being shall be written on distinct pieces of paper, being all of an equal size, and rolled up in the same manner, as near as may be, and shall be put in a box, or in some other convenient receptacle, and shall be shaken together, after which some person not interested in such election shall draw out the said names one by one until the number remaining in the said box or receptacle shall be reduced to six, and the six persons

whose names shall so remain shall be six of the directors for the ensuing year, after which the said subscribers present shall proceed to elect seven other persons from among themselves (either such as were or were not directors for the preceding year), and the seven persons so elected, together with the six persons whose names remained undrawn, as aforesaid, shall be the directors for putting this Act in execution for the year next ensuing. And the said subscribers shall also meet together on the 25th day of March, or within ten days after, in every succeeding year, and elect directors, in manner before mentioned, for the year then next ensuing. And in case any one, or more, of the said directors hereby appointed, or to be elected in manner aforesaid, shall die, or refuse to act in the execution of this Act, the said subscribers shall and may meet together at some convenient place in or near the said theatre, and elect a director or directors in the room and stead of the director or directors so dying or refusing to act as aforesaid. And every director so to be elected, in any or either of the cases aforesaid, shall have the said powers and authorities, for the purposes of carrying this Act into execution, as the directors herein and hereby nominated and appointed are invested with. PROVIDED ALWAYS AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that notice of every such election shall be affixed in writing in some conspicuous part of the said theatre, for three days at the least, immediately preceding such election, and that all elections shall be decided by a majority of votes, and that every subscriber to the said fund shall have a right to vote in every such election. PROVIDED ALSO, that at every annual election of directors for the purposes of this Act, a majority of the directors for the ensuing year shall consist of persons belonging to or employed at the same theatre. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that this Act shall be adjudged, deemed, and taken to be a public Act, and shall be judicially taken notice of by all judges, justices, and other persons whomsoever, without specially pleading the same.

One of the most interesting events of this period was the production of the amiable Dr. Goldsmith's first comedy of

“The Good-natured Man” It is wonderful and touching to see what difficulties were thrown in the way of this clever being, and how carelessly and contemptuously managers and actors were induced to carry out the arrangement they had made with him, and which they distrusted It was curious that two of his countrymen—Kelly and Bickerstaff—whose works are almost forgotten, should have stood in his way The former had brought out a play called “False Delicacy,” one of those far-fetched pieces which were later ridiculed as German, in which people refuse those they love and accept those they dislike, out of “delicacy.” Three thousand copies of the play were sold on the day of publication, while it was translated into several foreign languages with much success

Everything (says Dibdin) was at that time sentiment If a man was to be hanged, or married, out came a sentiment If a rogue triumphed, or was tossed in a blanket, what an opportunity for a sentiment! If the butler was drunk, or the chambermaid impertinent, listen to a sentiment! “False Delicacy” had almost all these requisites, and, that the audience might have enough of their darling sentiments after they had been delighted with a plentiful number of them in the course of the action, the moment the catastrophe finished, *forward came every individual actor and actress, and suspended the fall of the curtain with a sentiment!\**

Bickerstaff, too, was pressing for the production of his opera, “Lionel and Clarissa,” and grumbling at its being postponed for Dr Goldsmith’s piece.

First, the doctor had given his play to Garrick, who

\* Goldsmith did not witness the complete condemnation of a play of Kelly’s, which occurred later It was as complete as his success had been It may be added here, as an illustration of theatrical manners, that one night, when Foote had produced a sanguinary tragedy, in which the Barrys were performing, Goldsmith, who was in the pit, after listening impatiently, got up and went out, exclaiming in a loud voice, “Brownrigg, by ———!”—alluding to the well known murderess It will be seen later that Foote did the same thing when his theatre had changed hands

entered on its consideration with an air of gracious pationage, which the poet resented. The next step was to ask for a small advance, and the sensitive poet noticed that he then presumed on this to propose alterations. He objected particularly to *Lofty*, as detracting from the main interest. Other objections followed, which were secretly and at last openly resented. This was the course Garrick pursued with every piece he accepted, and it is, it may be said plainly, the only true and proper course. The manager should be joined, more or less, in this sort of authorship. He represents his actors and his theatre—important interests—and the play suggests to him what the author cannot know, advantages or disadvantages. In the Garrick letters, it is truly instructive to follow the course of a piece under this system of composition and how it grew slowly, and was altered and shaped and experimented on. Half the failures of our day may be ascribed to this cause. Mr Dibdin heard Goldsmith give an account of his treatment.

In my hearing he said that Garrick wanted to foist in so much stuff of his own that he grew tired of his objections and would not leave the play with him, which foisting in, perhaps, would have done the effect of the play no injury, though Goldsmith was twenty times a better writer than Garrick, but this was not the case. Goldsmith had offended Garrick, for a forced smile with him was always a symptom of anger, and therefore he would not take the pains to whistle to him. He had a fair excuse for getting rid of the play, which both his resentment to Goldsmith and his friendship to Kelly, who, together with sentimental comedy was cut up by it, had predetermined him not to accept upon any account.

After the opposition to Garrick had been opened at Covent Garden, and his friend Colman had become a manager, the poet saw there was a chance of relief, and Colman's first act was to receive the comedy of his friend.

At the rehearsals the actors found fault with their parts.

Powell, who did Honeywood, complained there was acting "to try out his abilities" Colman began to think the humour dangerously broad or "low." There were what is called "long faces," but it was determined to go through with it. Johnson attended the rehearsals and furnished a prologue

The appointed night came round, January 27th, 1768. Bensley, the admirer of Charles Lamb, delivered the prologue in solemn and lugubrious tones. But it was a gloomy and uneffective composition. The piece hovered in the balance for a time, for the bailiffs were accounted "low," but Shuter's great scene of discovering the blowing-up conspiracy put the house in thorough good-humour. It will be curious to read one of the more elaborate critiques of the day, and it will be noted how they patronised him.

Mr Colman, the acting manager, has been indefatigable in promoting the entertainment of the town, and a new comedy, called "The Good-natured Man," written by Dr Goldsmith, the celebrated author of "The Traveller," has been brought out since our last, but we are sorry to say the success of this piece no way answered the very warm expectations which were entertained of its merits by the world, everybody naturally looked for an extraordinary production from the masterly hand which enriched the republic of letters with "The Prospect of Society," yet it is too melancholy a truth, that everybody who cherished this sanguine opinion was unhappily disappointed when it made its appearance upon the stage.

It must, however, be confessed, for the honour of Dr Goldsmith, that he seems to have erred much less through a want of real genius for the stage than through an accountable partiality for the humour of Molière and other celebrated writers of the last century. In his preface he says "When I undertook to write a comedy, I confess I was strongly prepossessed in favour of the poets of the last age, and strove to imitate them. The term 'genteel comedy' was then unknown amongst us, and little more was desired by an audience than nature and humour, in whatever walks of life they were most conspicuous. The author of the following scenes never



imagined that more would be expected of him, and therefore to delineate character has been his principal aim. Those who know anything of composition are sensible, that in pursuing humour it will sometimes lead us into the recesses of the mean, I was even tempted to look for it in the master of a spunging-house. But in deference to the public taste, grown of late, perhaps, too delicate, the scene of the bailiffs (*a scene which gave great offence the first night*) was retrenched in the representation—in deference also to the judgment of a few friends, who think in a particular way the scene is here restored. The author submits it to the reader in his closet, and hopes that too much refinement will not banish humour and character from ours, as it has already done from the French theatre. Indeed, the French comedy is now become so very elevated and sentimental, that it has not only banished humour and Molière from the stage, but it has banished spectators too.”

Dr Goldsmith has talents, he has extraordinary talents, and had he been less attached to the now almost exploded dramatic writers of the last century, he would doubtless have produced a work no less honourable to himself than advantageous to his country, but his passion for humour has been too strong for his good sense, and he has carried his admiration of it to such an extravagance as scarcely to have a circumstance in his piece which can lay any unquestionable claim to the title of originality. The character of Croaker, for instance, and all the incidents relative to Leontine and Olivia, he has borrowed from “*Le Grondeur*,” the Good-natured Man he has taken from “*L’Ami tout le Monde*,” Lofty, and everything that relates to him, from “*L’Important de la Cour*.” His bailiffs are to be found, and better drawn, in Racine’s “*Les Plaideurs*,” the scene where the Good-natured Man espouses the different opinions of Mr and Mrs Croaker is the only thing in Molière’s “*L’Avare*” which Fielding has not translated, and the scene where he solicits Miss Richland in favour of his friend Lofty, will be found in “*Le Dissipateur*,” by Dr Touche.

Having thus considered “*The Good-natured Man*” with more attention than we should perhaps have shown to a writer of less reputation than Dr Goldsmith, we shall now make an observation or two upon the prologue, which is written by his very learned friend Dr Johnson, as it has been mentioned

with uncommon admiration by the friends of its justly celebrated author As for the good sense of his little composition, we beg leave to submit it to the consideration of our readers

Pressed by the load of life, the weary mind  
 Surveys the general toil of human kind,  
 With cool submission joins the labouring train,  
 And social sorrow loses half its pain  
 Our anxious bard, without complaint, may share  
 This bustling season's epidemic care  
 Like Cæsar's Pilot, dignified by fate,  
 Tossed in one common storm with all the great;  
 Distressed alike, the statesman and the wit,  
 When one a borough courts, and one the pit.  
 The busy candidates for power and fame  
 Have hopes, and fears, and wishes, just the same,  
 Disabled both to combat or to fly,  
 Must hear all taunts and hear without reply  
 Uncheck'd on both, loud rabbles vent their rage  
 As mongrels bay the lion in a cage  
 Th' offended burgess hoards his angry tale  
 For that blest year when all that vote may rail,  
 Their schemes of spite the poet's foes dismiss  
 Till that glad night when all that hate may hiss  
 This day the powder'd curls and golden coat,  
 Says swelling Crispin, beg'd a cobbler's vote  
 This night, our wit, the pett apprentice cries,  
 Lies at my feet, I hiss him and he dies  
 The great, 'tis true, can charm th' electing tribe,  
 The bard may supplicate, but cannot bribe  
 Yet judg'd by those whose voices ne'er were sold,  
 He feels no want of ill-persuading gold,  
 But confident of praise, if praise be due,  
 Trusts without fear, to merit and to you

Without remarking particularly on the versification of the foregoing prologue, which, to say the truth, is not uncommonly excellent, we must entreat the reader to tell us the meaning of it In one place, Dr Johnson, with a politeness of a very

extraordinary nature, says, that on the poet as well as on the statesman

Loud rabbles (that is, the audience) vent their rage  
As mongrels bay the lion in a cage,

In another place says the prologue writer

This night, our wit, the pert apprentice cries,  
Lies at my feet, I hiss him and he dies

And in a third place we are told,

The great, 'tis true, can charm th' electing tribe,  
The bard may supplicate, but cannot bribe

From these passages an unreflecting reader would be apt to think the poor poet in a very miserable situation, and he might also be apt to imagine the "loud rabble," "the pert apprentice," and acknowledged poverty, very formidable enemies for an author to encounter. But if we only go on a little farther, we shall find our good-natur'd apprehension is wholly without foundation, for there neither is a loud rabble nor a pert apprentice; on the contrary, the audience are the best-natured people in the world, and the happy bard, so far from wanting money to bribe with, is to be——

Judg'd by those whose voices ne'er were sold,  
He feels no want of ill-persuading gold,  
But confident of praise, if praise be due,  
Trusts without fear, to merit and to you.

For the credit of Dr Samuel Johnson, author of "The Rambler," we hope that his name is only used at the head of the prologue to assist the sale of the book, and yet we fear this delicious morsel is actually his writing, because, had it been happily otherwise, his good sense would have led him to disown it long since by a public advertisement.

Passing on to the year 1773, we find it was celebrated as that of the production of the most successful of Goldsmith's two plays, "She Stoops to Conquer"—that spirited and ever popular play, which actors delight in performing. To the

author, then in sore difficulties, it was a source of nervous excitement, so much depending on it, as, indeed, his piteous letter to the manager, George Colman, shows

DEAR SIR,

I entreat you will relieve me from that state of suspense in which I have been kept for a long time. Whatever objections you have made, or shall make, to my play, I will endeavour to remove, and not argue about them. To bring in any new judges of its merits or faults I can never submit to. Upon a former occasion, when my other play was before Mr Garrick, he offered to bring me before Mr Whitehead's tribunal, but I refused the proposal with indignation, I hope I shall not experience as hard a treatment from you as from him. I have, as you know, a large sum of money to make up shortly, by accepting my play I can readily satisfy my creditor that way, at any rate, I must look about to some certainty to be prepared. For God's sake take the play, and let us make the best of it, and let me have the same measure at least which you have given as bad plays as mine.

I am, your Friend and Servant,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

It was proposed by Sir Joshua Reynolds to call it "The Belle's Stratagem," a name afterwards adopted by Mrs. Cowley. Goldsmith and his friends were indeed "in labour" up to the last moment for a name, and the one it bears was selected in great haste. At a dinner given on the day of the performance he could not swallow a mouthful. He had not courage to attend the performance, but wandered about in the park with strange misgivings. Coming behind the scenes he thought he heard something like disapprobation, and asked the manager nervously what it was. "Pshaw, doctor!" said the latter, roughly but wittily, "don't be frightened at a squib, when for the last two hours we have been sitting on a barrel of gunpowder." It was perfectly successful, and with his

countryman Sheridan's plays, form the few genuine "stock-pieces" of the stage \*

Yet with his old ground of complaint and sense of injury we find the poet, when he had a new play ready, putting it into the hands of Mr Garrick Colman had found serious objections to it, and the author had taken it away from him and given it to the other manager Garrick seems also to have found objections, and the poor, sensitive, but uncertain Goldsmith again reclaimed it and restored it to Colman

He wrote on February 6th, 1773.

DEAR SIR,

I ask you many pardons for the trouble I gave you of yesterday Upon more mature deliberation, and the advice of a sensible friend, I began to think it indelicate in me to throw upon you the odium of confirming Mr Colman's sentence I therefore request you will send my play by my servant back, for having been assured of having it acted at the other house, though I confess yours in every respect more to my wish, yet it would be folly in me to forego an advantage which lies in my power of appealing from Mr Colman's opinion to the judgment of the town I entreat, if not too late, you will keep this affair a secret for some time

It must be confessed there is soundness in Garrick's judgment on his first piece The play has never really "taken" There have been several revivals in our time, with admirable actors, and the feeling left was that it did not go home to the hearts of the audience, to whom it was novel, that there was a lack of story to interest, and the characters do not belong to such a story as this is The bailiffs always seem "out of key," to belong to broad farce, and to have got in by mistake.

\* It will be recollected that the critics charged Goldsmith with borrowing his characters in "The Good-natured Man" In his other play there can be little doubt, on comparison, that Tony and his mother are taken from the Widow Blackacre and her son, in "The Plain Dealer" The name of Lofty, in "The Good-natured Man," is found, I think, in one of Fielding's plays

Choker is of course delightful, but Lofty seems forced. As an "acting play" it does not compare with "She Stoops to Conquer."

It seems difficult at this time to realise the significance of the prologue and epilogue, and the vast importance attached to such accessories. Though such things were often supplied by authors as capable as the writers of the pieces—such as Johnson, Garrick, etc—it may be said that its real interest was in the opportunity it offered the actor of exhibiting himself in the most familiar mood to his friends and the public. This was the real object of the prologue. the reciter was before the curtain, among the audience, as it were, or perhaps on a sort of debateable ground—the No-man's land—on which the speaker was neither player nor yet a professional. Thus the public might enjoy a sort of familiar converse with their favourite, while, on his side, he might claim the privilege of his theatrical dignity. Taken in its true and sober bearing, there was some interest in a really fine prologue delivered gracefully. it seemed to strike the key of the story that was to follow and excite a sort of anticipation. With a good speaker it was an interesting performance, quite different from the detached recitations we have on the modern stage.

The epilogue was a much more free-and-easy performance: there the gay actress gave way to boisterous spirits and fun. All sorts of farcical devices were adopted—running in as if pursued, or two ladies wrangling. It was thus that Goldsmith meant to conclude his comedy:

Enter Mrs Bulkley, who curtsies very low as she is beginning to speak. Then enters Miss Catley, who stands full before her.

*Mrs B.* Hold, ma'am! your pardon. What's your business here?

*Miss C.* The epilogue.

*Mrs B.* The epilogue?

*Miss C* Yes, the epilogue, my dear

*Mrs B* Sure, you mistake, ma'am. The epilogue! I bring it

*Miss C* Excuse me, ma'am, the author bid me sing it

(*Begins*) Ye beaux and belles that form this splendid ring,  
Suspend your conversation while I sing

On another occasion Mr Woodward appeared, "dressed in black, and holding a handkerchief to his eyes."

Excuse me, sirs, I pray, I can't yet speak,  
I'm crying now, and have been all the week

In short, it would take long to give specimens of this free-and-easy style Yet it was considered of great importance to have a suitable prologue by an eminent hand was essential The custom continued in vogue till so lately as thirty or forty years ago, one of the last contributions being no less than a piece by the late Mr Dickens, who furnished one for Mr Westland Marston's "Patrician's Daughter"

In 1773, when Colman was in full control of the Haymarket, that extraordinary character Macklin proposed to him a fresh engagement, and the other, who was either not ill-natured, or found it profitable, heartily agreed. It is significant of the attractions of this veteran that he had received no less a sum than 20*l* a night with a benefit, and which enormous salary had been profitable to the house. It is astonishing, however, that Colman, who knew the man, would expose himself afresh to the risk of the contention and confusion he was certain to bring with him Almost at the opening there was a dispute about characters and the engagement of Smith, on which he drew up "statements," for which he had an unlucky Micawberlike facility for composing. But by this time he had accumulated a vast amount of enmity, and a confederacy seems to have been formed to put him down. There were many green-room whispers abroad as to something

impending. "Macbeth" was the play chosen, and he had taken special pains with the "business" and costumes. He had been struck with the absurdity of the English general officer's dress, and determined to reform it altogether. But his figure—cumbersome and ill-shaped—and his age (he was then seventy-three) were against him. "On his entrance the audience were inclined to laugh when they saw a clumsy old man, who looked more like a Scotch piper than a general and prince of the blood, stumping down the stage at the head of a supposed conquering army, 'commanding a halt upon the heath.' There was some opposition, and on one of the following performances he made a speech, in which he accused Sparks and Reddish, two of the Drury Lane corps, of hissing him. This was pointed, of course, at Garrick, who, it was charged, was jealous of being obtruded upon in those parts in which he had so long stood without a competitor, and he said that Reddish (a performer of eminence then at Drury Lane Theatre) actually refused paying a fine imposed on him for non-attendance of his duty by the deputy manager, 'because he was with Mr Garrick on this business.'"

The two actors published affidavits declaring they had never done so, but Macklin again came forward with "an MS in his hand" and reiterated his charge, all which, it may be imagined, added to the excitement, and brought crowds. His faction was strong, and supported him. When he came forward as Shylock (his best character) his enemies rallied, and a fearful riot took place, which actually drove him from the theatre. What followed is dramatic enough, and shows Macklin to have been a man of power. It would seem that some persons had actually gone round the taverns recruiting bands of tailors and others by giving them money, some of these persons were of respectable station, who might have been expected to have been above such behaviour.



Leigh, the tailor, applied to some people of his own trade, to solicit their assistance, representing to them the purpose for which he wanted that assistance, telling them that a *certain old villain* of the name of Macklin, of whom they knew nothing, and of whom he knew as little, had given somebody, whom he did not know, some affront, and, for the purpose of revenging that somebody, they were desired to go to this playhouse. This Mr Leigh succeeded very well in his first efforts to collect a party, for this purpose he deputed a man of the name of Archer to act the part of lieutenant-general, and he is sent to some alehouse—The Dog, I think—to head a party there. Another man, with another name, in a similar office, was sent to the Phoenix alehouse to collect another party there. At these alehouses parties were collected, forty or fifty at one, and an equal number at another, such of the men as could read were given a paper to read, such of them that had eyes, and could see, were to take notice of a signal which was to be exhibited, such as had no eyes to see, and could only hear, were told that a whistle would be given, which they were to listen for. The commanders having given these orders among the very spirited corps of tailors, they were told that, besides all this comfortable preparation, they should each of them have a shilling apiece for the night's work, and after the work should be completed, and this old unknown villain of the name of Macklin should be driven to hell, these men should go to the Bedford Arms and have a supper.

On the appearance of Shylock a terrific uproar set in, and Colman was called for, and when the old actor advanced, in opposition to the general sense of the audience, on being desired to go off he peremptorily refused, and in the most insolent manner advanced to the orchestra and stamped with his feet, and continued on the stage.

What followed is thus described by the old actor himself in the court

Before the curtain was drawn up he heard a great acclamation among the audience, he saw Aldus come out of the front box into the pit, and he was received with various kinds

of applause When the curtain drew up, or rather before, there was a chorus of "No play, no play, off, off" The actors were quite silent. It was in vain for them to attempt to speak, but they made a kind of sham effort or address used upon those occasions, being unwilling to leave the stage till they were forced, then the tumult ran very high Mr. Colman said to him, behind the scenes, "Go on" He expostulated with him "What signifies (says Macklin) my going on with this noise, I cannot be heard, but if you insist upon it I will" The moment he appeared, if the uproar could be heightened, it was, and there were a great many apples thrown upon the stage, and, as he knew James, he stooped down to him, and said "Sir, will you hear me?" Now what does James do upon this? Why, upon that application, he, with great rage, says, "Off, off, off" And he and his companions flourished their sticks at him, and pointed at him, and reached at him over the orchestra, for he stooped down over as far as he could, and if he had not made his retreat he would have been struck by him He says "He desired to know of James what they wanted?" He kneeled down to get nearer, and said, "I cannot distinguish well what you say, but put it on paper and I will obey it, or give you an answer," or words to that effect. Upon this, a gentleman, I think Chapman, furnished him with a pencil and a card, when he wrote that Macklin was to ask pardon. Upon reading this card, Macklin asked him upon what he founded his commands "Off, off, down on your knees" He says, "I insisted I would not down upon my knees The people called out, 'Macklin, Macklin, speak to the house,' then, with his arms lifted up he applied to the gallery, but still the noise continued, then he extended himself and addressed Leigh and Aldus, the outrage was then quite in the extreme, and they wanted him to ask pardon, and kept up the clamour still, 'Off, off,' he applied to Miles, who sat in the first or second row next the orchestra he started up and menaced him with his stick, accompanied with every mark of anger, and said, 'You're a villain, you're a rascal, you're a scoundrel, off, off,' then James called to him in severe terms, 'Get off, pull off your dress, your Shylock's dress'" He says "In order to conciliate these gentlemen he went and pulled off his dress and put on his own clothes

and then returned, that then the outrage was great indeed. In that condition he remained some time, but, being pelted and hit with an apple in the face, which came from somebody in the second row in the pit, who stooped after they threw it, he took up the apple and showed it to the audience. He says he knew the person who threw it, that it was not one of the defendants." Then Bensley and Woodward came on and addressed the audience, but what they said he could not tell because of the noise. Then another actor brought this black board that had the inscription in large white characters, which seems to be the sentence they had obtained "At the command of the public, Mr Macklin is discharged from the theatre." This was what they were to obtain—not the woman. This board, so exhibited, was turned to every part of the house. Then there was a murmur of applause, that was what they wanted, but there was a clamour for Mr Colman still. Two or three gentlemen came from the boxes and said, "That the audience was in great ferment, and that great damage would be done to the theatre if Mr Colman did not go on." Upon which he went on and said, "That ever since he and his fellow-proprietors had had the dominion in that theatre they had made it their study to please the public and obey their commands, as they would upon the present occasion." Upon this there was a great applause, he then put the question, "Is it your pleasure Mr Macklin should be discharged?" He, the witness, says, he heard a great many ayes, and he thought some noes. Then Mr Colman said, "Mr Macklin is discharged."

This was a really serious blow, for the actor, as we have seen, was in receipt of a large salary thus abruptly cut off. It was shown by the treasurer's account that he was to receive 400*l.* for the season, 100*l.* for a new farce, with the produce of a benefit, valued at 200*l.* or 230*l.*

Lord Mansfield, who all through behaved like the constitutional judge he was, laid down the law of "hissing" in a well-known passage, in which the law is clearly expounded for the benefit of all future dissentients.

Every man that is at the playhouse has a right to express his approbation or disapprobation instantaneously, according as he likes either the acting or piece ; that is a right due to the theatre, an unalterable right—they must have that. The gist of the crime here is coming by conspiracy to ruin a particular man—to hiss if they were ever so pleased—let him do ever so well, they were to knock him down and hiss him off the stage. They did not come to approve or disapprove, as the sentiments of their mind might be, but they came with a black design, and that is the most ungenerous thing that can be. What a terrible condition is an actor upon the stage in with an enemy who makes part of the audience ! It is ungenerous to take the advantage, and what makes the black part of the case is, it is all done with a conspiracy to ruin him and if the Court were to imprison and fine every one of them, Mr Macklin may bring his action against them, and I am satisfied there is no jury that would not give considerable damages

There was a disposition to make all amends to the injured, and much debate followed as to what form the *amende* was to take. The large indemnity necessary alarmed those on trial, who declared it would be their ruin. On which the old veteran mildly interfered.

*Lord Mansfield* I advise him to consent —*Mr. Macklin*  
My lord, I shall always be happy in obeying any advice that comes from this court, but there is one circumstance that I think demands an explanation. Whatever falls from the tongue of an advocate is easily transferred to the report, and the credulity of the public. A gentleman has thrown out that I want revenge. My lord, I have no such idea. I never had. If this matter had been submitted to me, they would have found me a far different kind of man—not a man of revenge. In every stage of this business, my lord, from the first to the last, I have felt a resentment, but I have always felt a compassion, even for the people I was prosecuting. I have only my expenses in view. Besides, my daughter has suffered to the amount of 250*l*. I have now proposals from Scotland, I have proposals from Ireland, I could get money here. And, my

lord, I have something further to say this man before your lordship, this taylor, within these few days, has dared to tell me, before many witnesses, responsible tradesmen, in Covent Garden, with an insolence unbecoming his situation or character "Ah, ah, ah ' you will send me to gaol then ; it may be against the law to hiss, but it is not against the law to laugh, for, depend upon it, when you play tragedy, you will have a very merry audience—ah, ah, ah ! " I assure your lordship, that this man, though he is but a taylor, has a very sharp tongue, and a very quick mind My lord, were I to utter his *bon mots* upon me and my circumstances, you would laugh heartily indeed, but of him I shall say no more My lord, I have gentlemen in court to prove that I laid a plan of general accommodation, and I will reveal it now

Mr. Macklin here addressed himself to the defendants

But how is this compensation to be made ? What was the mode I suggested ? It is this

Let them take 100*l* worth of tickets for Miss Macklin's benefit She has lost 250*l* Let them take 100*l* worth of tickets for Mr Macklin, and let them take 100*l* worth of tickets, upon some night that he plays, as a kind of compensation to the managers This was of no advantage to me I can fill my house without it ; but I meant to give them the popularity of doing a justice to the man they had injured, and of convincing the public that they would never do the like again, and that they were in amity, and not in enmity, with me My lord, I have nothing more to say

*Lord Mansfield* Then I think you have done yourself great credit and great honour by what you have now said, and I think your conduct is wise, too, and I think it will support you with the public against any man that shall attack you. Mr Macklin, you have done yourself great credit by it, and the public, I am satisfied, especially in this country, love generosity You will do more good by this, in the eyes of the public, than if you had received all the money that you had a right to receive I think you have acted handsomely, honestly, honourably, and done yourself great service by it I think it is a most generous conduct. Mr Blake, you will be able to settle it

*Mr. Macklin.* If Messrs. Clarke, Aldus, and James will

meet me—I will not meet the taylor, for it is impossible to confine his tongue

*Lord Mansfield* Mr Macklin, see whether I cannot make peace between you Now, suppose he undertakes to be bound by a rule of court to stand committed if he ever so much as, by look or word, puts you in a passion The proposal, then, is to pay him his costs, and to take 300*l* worth of tickets in the way that he has mentioned Let it be so. Mr Macklin, the house will receive so much benefit from it, perhaps they will pay you the arrears

*Mr Macklin* My lord, I never did quarrel with a manager for money yet. I never made a bargain with a man, whatever they offer me, I take

*Lord Mansfield* You have met with great applause to-day. You never acted better

In 1773, the Covent Garden management determined to revive “The Beggar’s Opera,” to the consternation of the magistrates at Bow Street It is curious to think that these worthies should have believed that this play gave encouragement to the thieves and malefactors, and addressed an appeal to the managers They urged that, when it was played some time ago, “it most undoubtedly increased the number of thieves, and that the managers of Drury Lane had obligingly returned for answer, that for that night it was too late to stop it, but that for the future they would not play it, if the other house did not Under these circumstances, from a sense of duty and the principles of humanity, the magistrates make the same request to Mr. Colman and the rest of the managers of His Majesty’s Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, the same opera being advertised to be played before this night”

Colman, however, met them in quite a suitable spirit.

Mr Colman presents his best respects to the magistrates, with whose note he has been just honoured He has not yet had an opportunity of submitting it to the other managers, but, for his own part, cannot help differing in opinion with

the magistrates, thinking that the theatre is one of the *very few houses in the neighbourhood* that does not contribute to increase the number of thieves

This suggests the ready device of one who demurely proposed to submit all objections to the Archbishop of Canterbury, offering to remove what he objected to, on which the lively prelate declined, he good-naturedly saying to his friends that he had no notion of having the piece published "with the approbation of the Archbishop of Canterbury"

Another odd proceeding which marked the same year is worth mentioning, as showing the conscientious anxiety of the good old school of actors not to be thought failing in their duty Reddish, a useful performer, was announced in the part of Alonzo, but through some absence of mind or misapprehension, very natural in those days when the play was changed every night, did not go to the theatre He recalled it when too late, went, in great agitation, to Bow Street, and made the following affidavit before Sir Sampson Wright

Samuel Reddish, of Drury Lane Theatre, maketh oath, and declares, that the only reason of his not being at the theatre this night, to perform his part in the tragedy of "Alonzo," was entirely owing to his thinking it was an oration night, and, that the unhappy mistake may not be misconstrued into a wilful neglect of his duty, he most humbly begs pardon of the public for the disappointment

SAMUEL REDDISH.

This scrupulousness contrasts with the carelessness and disorder which set in when Garrick resigned the management

## CHAPTER VIII

### COLMAN AND THE HAYMARKET

GEORGE COLMAN the elder having disposed of his share in Covent Garden Theatre in 1774, remained without management for three years, when finding that the unfortunate Foote was about to retire, he determined to take his place. Knowing with whom he had to deal, he employed an agent to conduct the negotiations, and kept his name concealed \*

The patent was only for Foote's life, so that, it would appear, was all he had to dispose of. For this he was to receive the handsome annuity of 1600*l*. For the theatre he, as well as Colman, had to pay rent to the landlord. He was to be also re-engaged, for his services as an actor, although, as it happened, he only performed three times, and Colman purchased the copyright of his unpublished dramatic pieces for 500*l*. It was mentioned that this patent

\* They often met at dinner, when Foote, enlarging, as was his wont, on all topics, would say "Now here's Colman, an experienced manager, he can tell you there's nobody can conduct such a peculiar business as mine but myself, but there's a *fat headed* fellow of an agent who has been boring me every morning at breakfast with terms for some blockhead who knows nothing about the stage, but whose money burns in his pocket." "Playhouse mad," said the other. "Right," replied Foote, "and if *bleeding* will bring him to his senses, he'll find me a devilish good doctor." "When the principals met to sign and seal, it might be conceived that Foote looked a little foolish, but it was said he never blushed in his life."



enabled the holder of it to open his house, annually, for the acting of all English dramatic performances from the 15th of May to the 15th of September, inclusive. As it proved, but a single half-year's payment was made when Foote died, so the bargain turned out an excellent one for Colman. The new manager, as well as his son, was a clever as well as a successful man. He gathered a large and excellent company for so small a house, one that included Charles Bannister, Blissett, Digges, Edwin, Miss Barsanti, later, Daly, the Dublin manager's wife, Mr and Mrs Davies, Miss Farren, Mrs. Jewell, Mrs Love, Henderson, the two Palmers, Parsons, and Foote himself—nearly fifty performers. Mr Winston has added some notes on the list of performers.

The theatre opened with the comedy of "The English Merchant," and "Lilliput," on the 15th of May, closed till the 28th, and then performed three nights a week, till the 11th of June. June 9th, Miss Farren first appeared in London in the character of Miss Hardcastle, in the comedy of "She Stoops to Conquer." June 11th, Mr Henderson (from Bath) first appeared in London in the character of Shylock. Mr Foote acted July 11th, 25th, and 30th only, was to perform again, but was prevented by illness. Mr Digges made his first appearance in London in the character of Cato on August 14th.

This Mr. Winston, who later had a share in the direction, deserves mention as one of the most diligent and omnivorous collectors of all matters appertaining to dramatic art. He had collected methodically, and from every source, newspapers, bills, memoirs, MSS, every detail that bore on the life and adventures of the English performers. These were written out in the neatest of hands, and, with paragraphs cut from newspapers, arranged under suitable headings. This mass of information thus collected was extraordinary, and though much was valueless, it was intended to be carefully

winnowed to form materials for a complete history of the stage I have heard there were vast quantities of this matter At his death all were dispersed, and even now some of these curious documents are to be found occasionally at the book and waste-paper shops of Clare Market I myself recovered a good many fragments.

The criticism, however, of the town was, that the company was meagre in first-rate talent "Among the men, indeed, there were two excellent comedians and established favourites—John Palmer and Parsons, the elder Bannister, also, was then in full voice, and very popular as a singer, after these we must descend to Aickin, commonly called 'Belly Aickin' (to distinguish him from his brother 'Tyrant Aickin'); nobody could be better in his secondary, or perhaps thirdly, line of characters R Palmer was then a rising young actor, who was afterwards unique in a few sketches of dramatic character, but he never attained the highest walks Du Dellamy, too, was remarkable while singing and speaking, for the cocking up of his thumbs This person was originally a shoemaker"

It should be remembered that this was what was called a summer theatre, and had to close at the season when the other houses began. This was a fair compromise, and kept the little theatre from being a rival to the patent houses Later, however, the term was extended to eight months, and Colman tried the experiment of engaging country actors of eminence, such as Mathews, but without much success

But the manager had drawn prizes in the three new performers—Henderson, Farren, and Edwin, "all coming together, these stars produced a constellation." Henderson was no doubt what might be called a "fine" actor Garrick, indeed, had pronounced, a couple of years before, "that he might be made to figure in any of the puppets of his time,"

though he had a method of *paving*, which was ridiculous—a happy word, borrowed from the curious sounds made by paviors. Miss Farren was, of course, the chief attraction.

To dilate (says the manager's son) upon the history of the lovely and accomplished Miss Farren, would be very superfluous. No person ever has more successfully performed the elegant levities of Lady Townly upon the stage, or more happily practised the amiable virtues of Lady Grace in the highest circles of society.

It is characteristic of the late proprietor that he should have noted these symptoms of success with ill-concealed jealousy, though his own annuity depended on the prosperity of the undertaking.

His pique broke out sometimes in downright rudeness. One morning he came hopping upon the stage during the rehearsal of "The Spanish Barber," which was shortly to be produced. "Well," said Foote, dryly, to my father, "how do you go on?" "Pretty well," was the answer, "but I can't teach one of these fellows to gape as he ought to do." "Can't you?" cried the rough Foote—"read him your last comedy of 'The Man of Business' and he'll yawn for a month."

More malicious was his proceeding in the case of Digges, when the latter made his *début*.

Digges had studied the antiquated style of acting, in short, was a fine bit of old stage buckram, and "Cato" was, therefore, selected for his first essay. He "discharged the character" in the same costume as it is to be supposed was adopted by Booth when the play was originally acted, that is, in a *shape*, as it was technically termed, of the stiffest order, decorated with gilt leather upon a black ground, with black stockings, black gloves, and a powdered periwig. Foote waited till the customary round of applause given to the actor on his entrance had subsided, and then ejaculated, in a pretended undertone, loud enough to be heard all around him: "A Roman chimney-sweeper on

May Day ' " The laughter which this produced in the pit was enough to knock up a *débutant*, and it startled the old stager personating the Stoic of Utica. The sarcasm was irresistibly funny, but Foote deserved to be kicked out of the house for his cruelty and his insolence, in mingling with the audience for the purpose of disconcerting a brother-actor.

Foote's stock-plays were chiefly of his own writing, and his *dramatis personæ* required little more than a few common coats and waistcoats. When he wanted more habiliments than he possessed he resorted to a *fripserie* in Monmouth Street—not to purchase, but to job them by the night; and so vilely did some of the apparel fit the actors, that he was often obliged to make a joke of the disgrace, and get the start of the audience, if he could, in a laugh against his own troop of tatterdemalions. There was a skeleton of a man belonging to his company, the arms of his coat were particularly wide, and the cuffs covered his hands, Foote, during the debate, always addressed this personage as the "much respected gentleman in the sleeves." So improvident was he, that he even hired most of the printed music which was played between the acts, thus paying for it many times its value.

It must be confessed that there is no character so celebrated of whom so much that is disagreeable is recorded. A hundred little touches, in all directions, betray his inborn malice. His frequent salutation of a little boy was a rough, "Blow your nose, child!" attended with a whimsical grin. His own nose was generally begrimed with snuff. As Colman says, his "paradoxical celebrity" on the stage was extraordinary, for his "plays" were not dramas, and his acting not of the legitimate kind. "Yet," adds that writer, "who could be named that for a series of years successfully maintained a theatre on his own writing, on his own acting, and for ten years of the time on a wooden leg?"

This prop to his person I once saw standing by his bedside, ready dressed in a handsome silk stocking, with a polished shoe and gold buckle, awaiting the owner's getting up, it had

a kind of tragi-comical appearance. His *undressed* supporter was the common wooden leg, like a mere stick, which was not a little injurious to a well-kept pleasure-ground. I remember following him, after a shower of rain, upon a nicely-rolled terrace, in which he stumped a deep round hole at every other step he took, till it appeared as if the gardener had been there with his dibble.

He had a wink (says O'Keefe), and a smile with one corner of his mouth, a harsh voice, except when mimicking. His manner on the stage was not very pleasant to the performers on with him, for he tried to engross all the attention, in speaking, his own face was turned full to the audience, while theirs was constantly in profile. It is a method with an old stager, who knows the advantageous points of his art, to stand back out of the level with the actor who is on with him, and thus he displays his own full figure and face to the audience. I was much diverted with seeing Macklin and Sheridan, as Othello and Iago, at this work, both endeavouring to keep back, they at last got together up against the back scene.

The term of this malignant being's life, however, was drawing to a close. It is clear from the instance of Digges that the lesson he had lately learned was thrown away, and that his ill-nature was *his* nature, and could not be changed. This disposes of the idea that he went away from England a broken man, who never raised up his head again. In May, 1777, he played for the last time, but it was noted that he looked ill, his cheeks withered and lank, his eyes sunk. In October he set off to France, got as far as Dover, where, seized with a shivering fit at breakfast on October 21st, he died in three hours.

Thus Colman found himself in possession of the little theatre, though his patent was expired. No doubt the proprietors were glad to have so good a tenant, and he secured a licence from the Lord Chamberlain. The house was, however,

in a dilapidated condition, and had to be restored "It was new roofed, the ceiling heightened, the slips (sidelong appendages, in the olden times, to the upper gallery) were turned into a third tier of front boxes, and an approach of a few feet wide, and fewer deep, dignified by the name of a lobby, was made to the boxes, whereas, in Foote's days, there was scarcely any space at all between them and the street, so that the attention of the audience in this part of the theatre was frequently distracted by post-horns, and the out-of-doors cry of 'Extraordinary News from France,' while the modern Aristophanes upon the stage was threatening French invaders with 'peppering their flat-bottomed boats,' in the character of Major Sturgeon. The avenues to all the side-boxes were so incurably narrow that, when two corpulent gentlemen met in them, and endeavoured to squeeze past each other, there was great danger of their sticking by the way"

A full enumeration of the different stage-riots would make a strange contribution to the annals of disorder. The most singular, however, was "The Tailors' Riot," in 1778, when Mr. Foote, after his manner, seized the occasion of a dispute between the master tailors and the journeymen to bring out an *à propos* piece. Many years later, in 1805, Dowton announced this piece for his benefit, when anonymous letters were sent to the manager, declaring that 17,000 tailors would attend to oppose it, and there would be 10,000 more tailors to assist if necessary. "On the morning of the day of performance he received a similar letter, but in more violent language, and it was signed 'DEATH.' He showed the letters to Mr Dowton, and it was agreed that if any violent opposition should be offered the piece should not be acted. Mr. Dowton himself received about fifty anonymous and threatening letters. In a short time after the doors were opened in the evening, the pit

and galleries were filled; and it was very remarkable that in the two galleries there were only two women Mr Dowton then made his appearance in character, when a pair of scissors was thrown at him from the galleries, and he offered a reward of 20*l.* for the apprehension of the offender” A terrible riot followed, and the soldiers had at last to be called in. There were footmen’s and charmen’s riots, etc.

Anticipating by some years, it may be said that one of the most piteous instances of that lingering on the stage beyond the fitting time was now to be furnished by the veteran Macklin, who, well-nigh forgotten, had resolved to come forward once more, and, as it proved for the last time, to exhibit such powers as were left to him On the night fixed he entered the green-room, dressed for the part of Shylock, and, with wondering eye, asked “What the play was?” He was told, and then asked, “Who was to play Shylock?” Notwithstanding this, he went on the stage, but soon faltered, and after awhile his memory became a blank, and he remained speechless Angelo recalled the painful scene.

After a long pause, the audience becoming out of patience, a general hissing ensued, regardless of his old age—then approaching to ninety Not being able to proceed, he retired I was in the pit, near to the orchestra, and was hurt to see the old man come forward on the stage, in one hand holding a candle, and in the other a paper, which he read to the audience

He did not survive very long. The other spectacle was the last appearance of the once beautiful Bellamy, now prematurely old, sunk in poverty and general decay.

One of the most flattering testimonials ever given to an actor arose out of an incident in the year 1778 in the House of Commons. The subject of this compliment was Mr. Garrick,

who one night in that year found himself listening to the debates.

Highly offensive language (says Mr Tom Taylor) having been used on this occasion, and one of the members having resented it, the Speaker was called upon to interfere, when another honourable member, unwilling that the world without should hear of the unseemly squabble, moved that the gallery should be cleared. Strangers were ordered to withdraw, and the gallery emptied gradually. Sir Henry Bridgeman, member for Wenlock, rose and observed, "That the motion to clear the gallery had not been obeyed . . . that a stranger was still present—that that stranger do withdraw." Mr. Burke on this rose and appealed to that assembly whether it would be consistent with decency and liberality to exclude from their debates a man to whom they were all obliged—one who was the first master of eloquence, in whose school they had all imbibed the art of speaking, and had been taught the elements of rhetoric. For his part, he was proud to own that he had been greatly indebted to that gentleman's instruction. This was eloquently amplified by all the resources of the rhetorician and illustrated with the fancy of a poet. When he had finished he was followed by a member even more remarkable in appearance—short, with Herculean limbs, though overloaded with fat, a complexion at once swarthy and sanguine, bushy black eyebrows overhanging eyes of rare sweetness and fire, a double chin, black hair, dishevelled and scantily powdered, and a dress as remarkable for slovenliness as that of the last speaker for shabbiness. This was Mr Fox. The voice of this orator was shrill and high pitched almost to discordance, and his utterance at first thick, hurried, and indistinct. It seemed at starting as if his ideas crowded to his tongue too fast for passage. His speech was a splendid variation on the same theme which the hearers might have thought had been exhausted by the preceding speaker. From this new mouth the same thoughts came with new turns of phrase and an original play of fancy, but there was a simplicity, directness, and apparent spontaneousness in the thoughts, that won upon the heart even more than the wonderful felicity of the language upon the ear. The House voted, almost by acclamation, that the stranger should remain.



Garrick, naturally proud of the compliment, wrote a poem on the occasion .

Squire Bridgeman rose with deep intent,  
 And certified to Parliament  
 That I—it was a shame and sin—  
 When others were shut out, got in ;  
 Asserting, in his wise oration,  
 I gloried in my situation  
 I own my features might betray  
 Peculiar joy I felt that day ,  
 I glory when my mind is feasted  
 With dainties it has seldom tasted  
 When reason chooses Fox's tongue  
 To be more rapid, clear, and strong  
 When from her classic urns Burke pours  
 A copious stream through banks and flowers.  
 My glory farther still extends,  
 For most of those I call my friends ,  
 But if, Squire Bridgeman, you were hurt  
 To see me, as you thought, so pert,  
 You ought to have punished my transgression,  
 And damped the ardour of expression.  
 A brute there is whose voice confounds,  
 And frights all other with strange sounds ;  
 Had you, your matchless powers displaying,  
 Like him, Squire Bridgeman, set a-braying,  
 I should have lost all exultation,  
 Nor gloried in my situation.

## CHAPTER IX

### GARRICK AND HIS ACTRESSES

THE time was now arrived when this great performer and sagacious administrator was to retire from his government. Many reasons inclined him to this course—one, which might have surprised some of our recent veteran actors, was that he was just sixty. But he felt a weariness stealing on him, his figure was deteriorating, his face losing its expression from increase of flesh. These were sufficient and sound reasons, but the world found others in the fact that he had been persecuted to death by the rebellious tone of three at least of his actresses. Had it been his interest to do so, Mr Garrick could have supported this trial as he had always done, when he found it necessary, but it seems more than likely that he forecasted the signs of failure and flagging attractions in the theatrical enterprise, and saw that the present was the time to sell. Of the perverse and harassing proceedings of the three Drury Lane actresses there could be no question. As displays of petulance they are amusing, as giving an idea of green-room troubles.

That there was a force of character and sense of duty and honour in the well-known "Kitty" has been shown. During the theatrical revolt before described she was one of those

figures that cannot be overlooked, like so many of this era. Says Tate Wilkinson .

I well remember, on the second night of the confederacy, Mrs Clive called Miss Pope into the green-room, before her going on the stage as Cornina, and said to her "My dear Pope" (a sweet appellation indeed from Clive), "you played particularly well on Saturday night as a young actress Now, take from me a piece of advice, which I would have every performer attend to You acted with great and deserved approbation, but to-night you must endeavour to act better, and expect to receive less applause, therefore, take my advice for your proceeding on the stage The violent thunder of applause last Saturday on your first appearance was not all deserved, it was only benevolently bestowed to give you the pleasing information that they were well delighted, and had their warmest wishes that you would hereafter merit the kindness they bestowed on you."

A sound and admirable piece of counsel, which gives a good idea of the actress's character

The much-enduring Garrick had a vast deal to suffer at her hands, and her humours and insolence were for many years his plague That there should have been a genuine friendship and mutual esteem under all this is creditable to both Yet she did not spare the manager, and her free tongue would even ridicule him before his company. Thus once, "when he was entering the green-room, arrayed magnificently in a glittering silver-spangled tissue shape, Mrs Clive, instead of court adulation, cried out, 'Oh my God! room! room! make room for the royal lamplighter!'" which rudeness disconcerted him much for the remaining part of the evening, and certainly it was too free, and not well timed, as he was trembling all over on the first night of a new part in a new play"

Mrs. Abington was not of such genuine metal She plagued the manager more effectually, being of a less delicate temper. She had, indeed, risen from the very dregs, and the story of

her whole career is interesting, as showing how an actress rose in those days. Some of the gifted and clever creatures, members of Garrick's company, had come, as it were, from the gutters and sewers even, but under sound theatrical discipline had become worthy members of the profession. What a career was that of this lady, painted so deliciously by Sir Joshua, looking over the back of a chair, her dog beside her! Mr. Murphy recollected, when frequenting the taverns about Drury Lane, a clever little girl, named Barton, belonging to Vinegar Yard, who would offer to recite Shakespeare for the gentlemen. According to the same authority, the succeeding portion of her life had best not be scrutinised, being, as it were, in the "puddle." But she married a humble player in the orchestra, "a smart-looking little man, lively in his conversation, and apparently the object of attention to those who were near him." Such a companion was but an incumbrance to one of her tastes, and it was understood that he was allowed an annuity on condition of not troubling her. Her force of character is shown, that, as soon as she had a fair opportunity, she struggled to *se ranger* and take a lead in matters of taste though not of morals. Even in dress, ladies came to consult her. And at Cork there were Abington caps shown in the windows. She sought the company of clever personages, and had a readiness of speech, coarse and vigorous, which recommended her.

"In 1759, first engaged at Old Drury, and little appreciated, she had come over to the Dublin Theatre, after having played a few chance parts at Bath, and from the first she met a very good and gracious acceptance, but not having the London stamp of consequence was only spoken of as really a very clever woman. When the lively comedy of 'High Life Below Stairs,' then a novelty, was brought out, everyone was enchanted with the vivacity of Kitty. It was perpetually acted, and with never-failing success. In ten days after its

being performed, Abington's cap was so much the taste with the ladies of fashion and *ton*, that there was not a milliner's shop-window, great or small, but was adorned with it, and in large letters 'Abington' appeared, to attract the passers-by. This Abington rage Woodward endeavoured to suppress by ridicule, not here described, but all to little or rather to no purpose, for her reputation as an actress daily increased." The testimonies of those who had seen her are all unanimous in her praise.

Her person (says Davies) is formed with great elegance; her address is graceful, her looks animated and expressive, the tones of her voice are not naturally charming to the ear, but her incomparable skill in modulation renders them perfectly agreeable. Her articulation is so exact that every syllable she utters is conveyed distinctly and even harmoniously. She, I think (says Mr Boaden), took more entire possession of the stage than any actress I have seen. Shall I say that I have never seen the fan in a hand so dexterous as that of Mrs Abington? She was a woman of great application; to speak as she did required more thought than usually attends female study. She seized upon the exact cadence and emphasis by which the point of the dialogue is enforced. Her voice was of a high pitch, and not very powerful. Her management of it alone made it an organ. Her deportment is not so easily described, far beyond even the conception of modern fine ladies, Mrs Abington remains in memory as a thing for chance to restore to us rather than design, and revive our polite comedy at the same time.

In Garrick's company she remained till he retired, though she was a perpetual thorn in his side, plaguing him in every way. At last he wrote of her, "she is as silly as she is false and treacherous," or describes her as "that most worthless creature," or "worst of bad women." Yet there was a touch of comedy in these wrangles, yet more pointed by the manager's unruffled calm under great provocation. When, in 1774, she was called upon to take a part at short notice, it was scarcely

wonderful that the manager wrote of her with the greatest bitterness "She is below the thought of any honest man or woman She is as silly as she is false and treacherous"

Yet the artful lady during this very time had contrived to win the favour of the great "Bear" of Bolt Court, and there is a pleasing passage in his life which would make a capital subject for a picture

On Monday, March 27th, 1775, I breakfasted with him at Mr Strahan's He told us that he was engaged to go that evening to Mrs Abington's benefit "She was visiting some ladies whom I was visiting, and begged that I would come to her benefit I told her I could not hear, but she insisted so much on my coming that it would have been brutal to have refused her." This was a speech quite characteristical He loved to bring forward his having been in the gay circles of life, and he was, perhaps, a little vain of the solicitations of this elegant and fashionable actress He told us the play was to be "The Hypocrite"

The night came round of this unusual spectacle of the doctor attending a theatre

I met him (says his friend) at Drury Lane playhouse in the evening Sir Joshua Reynolds, at Mrs Abington's request, had promised to bring a body of wits to her benefit; and having secured forty places in the front boxes, had done me the honour to put me in the group Johnson sat on the seat directly behind me, and as he could neither see nor hear at such a distance from the stage, he was wrapped up in grave abstraction, and seemed quite a cloud amidst all the sunshine of glitter and gaiety I wondered at his patience in sitting out a play of five acts and a farce of two He said very little, but after the prologue to "Bon Ton" had been spoken, which he could hear pretty well from the more slow and distinct utterance, he talked on prologue-writing, and observed, "Dryden has written prologues superior to any that David Garrick has written, but David Garrick has written more good prologues than Dryden has done. It is wonderful that

he has been able to write such variety of them" At Mr Beaucherk's, where I supped, was Mr Garrick, whom I made happy with Johnson's praise of his prologues

Boswell, it will be seen, notes that he could not see or hear, and a few nights later, at a tavern, he says

One of the company attempted, with too much forwardness, to rally him on his late appearance at the theatre, but had reason to repent of his temerity "Why, sir, did you go to Mrs Abington's benefit? Did you see?" Johnson "No, sir" "Did you hear?" Johnson "No, sir" "Why then, sir, did you go?" Johnson "Because, sir, she is a favourite of the public, and when the public cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit too."

This rebuke was, of course, given to Boswell himself

It was not, however, until Garrick had retired, and under the new management of Sheridan, that she became identified with the great success of "The School for Scandal," being the original Lady Teazle. This, though she was not in her prime, added vastly to her reputation

It is not less interesting to follow this clever woman into her unprofessional life, her company apparently being sought and appreciated by persons of some distinction. She had great powers of entertainment, and Mr. Taylor describes her at a party, leading and enlivening the conversation with her anecdotes and remarks.

Horace Walpole writes as follows

June 11th, 1780

MADAM,

You may certainly always command me and my house. My common custom is to give a ticket for only four persons at a time, but it would be very insolent in me, when all laws are set at naught, to pretend to prescribe rules At

such times there is a shadow of authority in setting the laws aside by the legislature itself, and though I have no army to supply their place, I declare Mrs Abington may march through all my dominions at the head of as large a troop as she pleases—I do not say, as she can muster and command, for then I am sure my house would not hold them. The day, too, is at her own choice, and the master is her very obedient, humble servant,

HOR WALPOLE

Mrs Abington's card-parties, which she was fond of giving, were attended by persons of the highest rank. She became in time to be almost fashionable. But she showed the weakness of the *parvenu* in going into hiding in London when distinguished people were out of town. There is a retired street of small old houses, close to Buckingham Palace, called Stafford Place, which she used to retire to for the purpose \*

"She died in Pall Mall, in March, 1815, at the advanced age of eighty-four, having contributed lustre to the profession she followed. One of the best records of her in her prime is Sherwin's beautiful tinted engraving, after Sir Joshua's picture of her as Roxalana. The grace and brilliancy of the performance make its attraction second only to that of the original."

Another of Sir Joshua's favourite subjects was the handsome Mrs Hartley, one of Garrick's effective tragedy ladies, and of whom there is a good full-length portrait in the Garrick Club, her red hair being conspicuous. It was the manager's custom to get regular reports of promising actors likely to suit him, and Mr. Moody, thus despatched, gives a sketch of her worthy of an eminent literary hand.

\* I once heard an actress thus taken up by "persons of quality," and who arrived at a party one night, lamenting loudly to Lady — that she had been obliged to take a cab!



Sunday, July 26th, 1772.

DEAR SIR,

I have to ask your pardon that I did not answer yours yesterday, but I was at Bath, it being a vacant day Mrs Hartley is a good figure, with a handsome small face, and very much freckled her hair red, and her neck and shoulders well turned There is not the least harmony in her voice, but when forced (which she never fails to do on every occasion), is loud and strong, but such an inarticulate gabble that you must be well acquainted with her part to understand her. She is ignorant and stubborn the latter might be got the better of at Drury Lane, and the former mended, but I despair of either at Covent Garden, where she is engaged notwithstanding, there is a superficial glare about her that may carry her through a few nights, but, be assured, she cannot last long She has a husband, a precious fool, that she heartily despises She talks lusciously, and has a slovenly good-nature about her that renders her prodigiously vulgar She is to "out-Jane Shore" all that ever went before her in that they intend to launch her. But all the last act is a perfect model of Mrs. Kennedy's "Mrs. Honeycomb."

The reader, who desires to learn more of the contentions with Mrs Yates and Miss Younge, which so worried Garrick, may peruse, with much entertainment, the amusing letters preserved in the "Garrick Correspondence"

## CHAPTER X.

### THE GARRICK SCHOOL.

GARRICK, after he retired, was to leave behind him a school of well-trained, well-graced actors, each furnished with a round of sterling characters, which they performed at regular intervals, and which belonged to them of right. They were, in fact, the characters, anyone else would be out of keeping. There are some admirable well-sketched descriptions of these players which, besides touching on some useful principles, bring them very picturesquely before us. Boaden, who was on friendly terms with many of them, and had a graphic though redundant style, shall portray them for us, all his amplifications being omitted.

*Macklin's* Shylock was seen by Bernand, the actor, and his recollection furnishes him with an excellent bit of criticism, well worthy the attention of the general performer. After saying that its success was owing to certain physical advantages which suited to his own peculiar nature, he adds "If the truth could be ascertained, I believe that the key to the success of all actors in particular characters would be found to consist in certain complexional resemblances between the two, independent of all genius, which enabled a more ready and perfect identity to take place; not that the man who plays a villain well must be a villain, or a hero a hero, but each must

possess some natural adaption to assume the one with more ease and felicity than the other. Cook and Kemble are cases in point”

*Smith.* This player enjoyed the complimentary *sobriquet* of “Gentleman Smith,” from his style and tastes, as from his having married a lady of title. His deportment was dignified and manly, his action graceful and never redundant. Nature had denied to him an expressive countenance, yet was he certainly a handsome man and an elegant stage figure. The fine gentleman in comedy was then very different from what it has since become—it was regulated by higher manners, and seemed born in polished life and educated in drawing-rooms. The dress kept the performer up to the character. It was necessary to wear the sword and to manage it gracefully. As the hair was dressed and powdered, the hat was supported under the arm. The mode of approaching the lady was more respectful; and it required the most delicate address to lead and seat her upon the stage. It will be recollected that ladies wore the hoop, and in all the brilliancy of court dress appeared very formidable beings. The flippancy of the modern style makes a bow look like a mockery, it does not seem naturally to belong to a man in pantaloons and a plain blue coat, with a white or a black waistcoat. Genteel comedy, among us, suffers greatly from the comparative undress of our times. What can you do, for instance, with such a comedy as “The Careless Husband”? Its dialogue could never proceed from the fashionables of the present day; different times can only be signified by difference of costume. Should we, therefore, venture back to the lace and embroidery, the swords and bags of the last age, *the difference from our present costume would excite a laugh*. [A curious comment on the system of stage costume then in vogue.] Mr Burke has observed the reason why these comedies in higher life are so pleasing. He adds “I have observed that persons, especially women, in lower life and of no breeding, are fond of such representations; it seems like *introducing them into good company*, and the honour compensates the dulness of the entertainment”

*Palmer*, in his general deportment, had a sort of elaborate grace and stately superiority, which he affected on all occasions, with an accompaniment of the most plausible politeness. He

was the same on and off the stage, he was constantly *acting* the man of superior accomplishments. This it was that rendered Palmer so exquisite in "High Life Below Stairs." He was *really* my lord duke's footman, *affecting* the airs and manners of his master, and here was the difference between him and Dodd, who, from the radical gentility of his fops, became in the kitchen the real Sir Harry, instead of his coxcomb and impudent valet.

Palmer, however, was an actor of infinite address, and sustained a very important line of business in the company. He was a man of great expense and luxurious habits, perfectly irreclaimable, and usually negligent, but he would throw up his eyes with astonishment that he had lost the word, or cast them down with penitent humility, wipe his lips with his eternal white handkerchief to smother his errors, and bow himself out of the greatest absurdities that continued idleness could bring upon him.

*Dodd*, with more confined powers, was one of the most perfect actors. He was the fopling of the *drama* rather than the age. He was, to be sure, the prince of pink heels and the soul of empty eminence. As he tottered rather than walked down the stage, in all the protuberance of endless mushin and lace in his cravats and frills, *he reminded you of the jutting motion of the pigeon*. His action was suited to his figure. He took his snuff, or his bergamot, with a delight so beyond all grosser enjoyments that he left you no doubt whatever of the superior happiness of a coxcomb.

*King*, though very confined in his powers, was one of the most perfect actors. His peculiar sententious manner made him seek, and indeed require, dialogue of the greatest point. He converted everything into epigram, and although no man's utterance was more rapid, yet the *ictus* fell so smartly upon the point, his tune was so perfect, and the members of his sentences were so well antagonised, that he spoke all such composition with more effect than any man of his time. He was at home in the arch and impudent valet who shares his master's imperfections with his confidence, and governs him by his utility. A character which I do not think belongs to our manners as a nation, and seems imported from the French stage, but never naturalised among us. Nothing approached

him in the dry and timid habitual bachelor, drawn into the desperate union with youth, and beauty, and gaiety

*Parsons* He was a master in the exhibition of vulgar importance. His Alscrip in "The Heiress" was ludicrous in the extreme, but it was, perhaps, reserved for Sheridan to show the utmost that Parsons could achieve in Sir Fretful Plagiary in "The Critic" I have repeatedly enjoyed this rich treat, and became sensible how painful laughter might be when such a man as Parsons chose to throw his whole force into a character. When he stood under the castigation of Sneer, affecting to enjoy criticisms which made him writhe in agony, when the tears were in his eyes and he suddenly checked his unnatural laugh to enable him to stare aghast upon his tormentors, a picture was exhibited of mental anguish and frantic rage, of mortified vanity and affected contempt, which would almost deter an author from the pen unless he could be sure of his firmness under every possible provocation

Passing over to Covent Garden with the same guide, we find not less entertainment

*Lewis* The youthful hero there was at this time sustained by Mr. Lewis, the sprightly, the gay, the exhilarating, the genteel, the animating soul of modern, and of much of ancient, comedy The charm of this really fine actor was in his animal spirits As a speaker he totally failed He hurried as much of a sentence together as he could in a breath, and stopped where the verbal complexion of what he said required him to go on In action he was the most restless of human beings He kept up a perpetual flicker before the eye, and seemed to exact an almost exclusive attention. As our theatres became larger this was rendered in some degree necessary, there was a great space to fill, and without infinite expression of the face an actor who did not bustle was totally without effect. The tendency of Lewis, just mentioned, rendered him rather insensible to the great results of combination in the scene.

*Wroughton's* person was ill-made, his face round and swoln, his features small and inexpressive, his voice uncertain, hoarse, and disagreeable However, a certain consequence invested his deportment. He was never vacant or idle.

*Quick* had most generally the honour to sustain the testy old gullable personage. There was the same constantly florid face, the same compression of the mouth and elevation of the eyebrows, the same shrill squeak in the utterance, and odd totter in the step, but his entrance was invariably the signal for honest hearty merriment. To this general effect of *Quick's* acting, an important circumstance in his theatrical life most powerfully contributed. He was beyond all comparison in comedy, the decided favourite of the late King, a determined patron of the stage. There was a gay and hearty jocularity about the King while sitting at a comedy—a something so endearing to see greatness relaxing from its state, throwing off, and apparently glad to throw off, some of the trammels of royalty, and exhibiting, without the least restraint, a full sense of pleasure at a liberal and enlightened amusement. *Quick's* powers of entertainment were not confined to the stage, he told a story admirably. The late King sometimes had him in attendance at Buckingham House, and the little time he could spare from the various business that pressed upon him he delighted to pass in listening to *Quick's* eccentricities. He frequently appointed to see him in the riding-house, and took his amusement and his exercise together.

*Edwin*. As a comedian he seemed born to give effect to the farces of O'Keefe. Peeping Tom had one scene more masterly than anything I have seen in a farce, I mean that of poor Tom's abstraction while, in his mind's eye, he sees the whole procession of Lady Godiva pass before him. This was a thing of pure fancy and infinitely productive. You would have sworn to the succeeding images of this procession, the distant view of the equitation of Godiva, her approach, "her unadorned charms" at last brought fully before his eye, and the burst of commentary, "Talk of a coronation!" all together produced a revelry of enjoyment that used to convulse the spectators, and it is a precious recollection of the power of a true comedian. Nothing from *Edwin*, in pure comedy, exceeded his Sir Hugh Evans, his study of the sword and the word, his ejaculations, his cholers and tremblings of mind; his music, his songs and psalms, neither and yet both; were among the greatest luxuries of the art.

A German critic, who came to London and wrote of the English actors, gives some masterly sketches. The following, of Weston and Garrick, in "Abel Druggier," is actually a lesson in acting. It is truly vivid in its power.

I think I see Weston before me, petrified at every sudden movement of the astrologers, or at any unusual noise which he does not immediately know how to interpret, standing like a mummy, with his feet parallel, and then, when the fear is over, coming to life again, first with his eyes, examining everything, and lastly turning his head slowly right and left till the whole house bursts into applause and laughter, even the critics laugh at the comical fellow. But when Garrick acts Abel Druggier it is the critics who begin the applause. Absorbed and benumbed as he is by the intensity of his feelings, the language of the looks is not wanting. He, therefore, makes poor Abel display his character—simplicity and superstition—in easy and natural yet original signs at every moment. I will mention only one trait. When the astrologers read in the stars, letter for letter, the name of Abel Druggier, now become celebrated, the poor simpleton has to say with inward pleasure, "That is my name." Garrick makes a secret delight of this, any open demonstration would have been out of keeping with his awe-stricken state. Turning away from the astrologers, he indulges for a while in his secret joy, so that he actually gets those red rings under the eyes which always accompany any strong yet forcibly suppressed feeling of pleasure; and after this pause, says to himself half aloud, "That is my name." This judicious secretiveness produces an indescribable effect. It marks not only the silly, passive fool and dupe, but that still more ridiculous form of ass who fancies himself a wonderfully clever fellow.

*Henderson.* He was at this time, perhaps, the greatest master of the art. His tragedy, however, was certainly inferior to his comedy. His understanding was of the highest order, and his feelings could be instantaneously excited, but his person was without either dignity or grace, and his eye,

though well placed for expression, wanted colour, as his face, though rather handsome, was too fleshy to show all the muscular action in which expression resides. He was neglectful, too, of such aids as might have been had to his figure. He paid not the slightest attention to costume, and was indifferent even as to the neatness or fitting of his dress. All his excellencies were perfectly concomitant with propriety of dress. Had he studied appearance his Lear might have been *venerable*. Although his Hamlet could not be the "mould of form," it might easily have been "the glass of fashion," but he never looked even to the linings of the suit he wore, and once boasted that he had played, I think, ten characters consecutively in the same coat. His conceptions were grand, and beautiful, and just, but they were often baffled by his execution of them. When Henderson's Lear was first discovered he looked like Falstaff sitting as Henry the Fourth, and when Lear speaks in his sleep, and fancying himself on the point of gaining the battle, exclaims, "Charge, charge upon the flank!" the tones were exactly those with which Falstaff encourages Hal in the combat with Percy, and excited a titter from so unsuitable a recollection. The power of Henderson was analytic. He was not contented with the mere light of common meaning—he showed it you through a prism, and refracted all the delicate and mingling hues that enter into the composition of any ray of human character.

*Miss Farren* She had succeeded at Drury Lane Theatre to the characters which had been performed by Mrs Abington, though it would be difficult to mention two actresses who differed more essentially in their comic style. They both delighted to exhibit the woman of fashion. She was, at this time, in her person, tall and perfectly graceful, her face was beautiful and expressive, her voice was rather thin, and of but slender power, but rendered effective by an articulation of the greatest neatness and precision. It was her practice, from the weakness of her organ, to stand rather forward upon the stage. The character of her acting was distinguished by the grace of delicacy beyond that of every comic actress I have seen. It was, as it were, the soul of all she did, and even in the comedies of Congreve she never lost it for a moment. The eye sparkled with intelligence. Her



levity therefore was never wanton, her mirth had no approach to rudeness. She played upon a coxcomb of either sex with the highest zest.

*Miss Pope* The paragon of chambermaids, the pert, sly, jocose abigail of modern comedy.

*Mrs Abington* She seemed to combine in her excellence the requisites for both the fashionable lady and her maid, and more, much more, than all this. I cannot endure that lady's "tongue." There was, in truth, such a tartness in her pleasantry; she was so fine a speaker of humour, like her friend Tom King—and they were so suited to each other, that they each lost nearly half their soul in their separation. The ball must be kept up by players of equal skill for the game to be perfectly played. There was the most *enjouement* in Mrs Abington that I have ever seen. She had more self-complacency, and seemed more triumphant in her captivations, than any other Lady Betty of my time. She saw nature through a highly-refined medium, and never condescended to vulgar taste. Her acting bore the marks of great application, and was at once surprising and delightful. The modern stage affords but a slight idea of her.

*Mrs. Mattocks* In her private manners she was rather refined, and had some of the graceful ease of the old school. On the stage she had a taste for the greatest breadth of effect, and excited probably as much laughter as Lewis himself. She was the patent representative of all widows of distinction, whether they were discriminated by valuable or mischievous properties. Nor were her chambermaids without the usual dexterity of the class.

The vulgar *Malkin*, raised into ludicrous importance, came from Mattocks in genuine coarseness, both of look and deportment. Her voice, on such occasions, was as dissonant as a saw, and she converted her natural quick short step and gliding gait into an awkward hobble or jolt, that seemed studied from the bumpkins of a country fair. She was a sort of stage Hogarth.

*Miss Younge* She had astonishing versatility as an actress. I know not whether, in strictness, her genius could be called of the first order; but she certainly was the most useful performer that any theatre could possess.

In comedy, her women of fashion, though rather too solid

and stately, were yet graceful and sportive. She did not affect a girlish activity—it was her mind that was buoyant, and it seemed to carry the frame lightly through the scene. I refer here more particularly to the fine flight of Miss Hardy in the masquerade scene of Mrs. Cowley's "Belle's Stratagem," "Join him in the victorious wai-dance on the borders of Lake Ontario," etc. The animation of some points, the subdued softness of others, and the swelling triumph of her close of the passage, furnished one of the most fascinating exhibitions upon the stage. Such was Miss Younge, and, to the last, such was Mrs. Pope.

We may also turn to a finer and better-known limner, Elia, whose sketches of this period are of the very finest class. Familiar as they are, they cannot be omitted from a history of the stage, but are printed with a little abridgment.

*Playbills.* The casual sight of an old playbill, which I picked up the other day—I know not by what chance it was preserved so long—tempts me to call to mind a few of the players who make the principal figure in it. It presents the cast of parts in the "Twelfth Night," at the old Drury Lane Theatre, two-and-thirty years ago. There is something very touching in these old remembrances. They make us think how we once used to read a playbill—not, as now, peradventure, singling out a favourite performer, and casting a negligent eye over the rest, but spelling out every name, down to the very mutes and servants of the scene,—when it was a matter of no small moment to us whether Whitfield or Packer took the part of Fabian, when Benson, and Burton, and Phillimore—names of small account—had an importance beyond what we can be content to attribute now to the time's best actors. "Orsino, by Mr. Barrymore." What a full Shakespearean sound it carries! how fresh to memory arise the image and the manner of the gentle actor!

*Mrs. Jordan.* Those who have only seen Mrs. Jordan within the last ten or fifteen years can have no adequate notion of her performance of such parts as Ophelia, Helena, in "All's Well that Ends Well;" and Viola in this play. Her voice had latterly acquired a coarseness which suited well enough with

her Nells and Hoydens, but in those days it sank, with her steady melting eye, into the heart. Her joyous parts—in which her memory now chiefly lives—in her youth were outdone by her plaintive ones. There is no giving an account how she delivered the disguised story of her love for Orsino. It was no set speech that she had foreseen, so as to weave it into an harmonious period, line necessarily following line, to make up the music—yet I have heard it so spoken, or rather read, not without its grace and beauty—but when she had declared her sister's history to be a "blank," and that she "never told her love," there was a pause, as if the story had ended—and then the image of the "worm in the bud" came up as a new suggestion—and the heightened image of "Patience" still followed after that, as by some growing (and not mechanical) process, thought springing up after thought, I would almost say, as they were watered by her tears.

*Bensley.* Of all the actors who flourished in my time—a melancholy phrase if taken aright, reader—Bensley had most of the swell of soul, was greatest in the delivery of heroic conceptions. He had the true poetical enthusiasm. None that I remember possessed even a portion of that fine madness which he threw out in Hotspur's famous rant about glory, or the transports of the Venetian incendiary at the vision of the fired city. His voice had the dissonance, and at times the inspiring effect of the trumpet. His gait was uncouth and stiff, but no way embarrassed by affectation, and the thoroughbred gentleman was uppermost in every movement. He let the passion or the sentiment do its own work without prop or bolstering. He would have scorned to mountebank it; and betrayed none of that cleverness which is the bane of serious acting. For this reason, his Iago was the only endurable one which I remember to have seen. No spectator, from his action, could divine more of his artifice than Othello was supposed to do. His confession in soliloquy alone put you in possession of the mystery. There were no by-intimations to make the audience fancy their own discernment so much greater than that of the Moor—who commonly stands like a great helpless mark set up for mine Ancient, and a quantity of barren spectators, to shoot their bolts at. The Iago of Bensley did not go to work so grossly. There was a triumphant tone about the character, natural to a general

consciousness of power, but none of that petty vanity which chuckles and cannot contain itself upon any little successful stroke of its knavery—as is common with your small villains and green probationers in mischief. It did not clap or crow before its time. It was not a man setting his wits at a child, and winking all the while at other children, who are mightily pleased at being let into the secret, but a consummate villain entrapping a noble nature into toils against which no discernment was available, where the manner was as fathomless as the purpose seemed dark and without motive. The part of Malvolio, in the “Twelfth Night,” was performed by Bensley with a richness and a dignity of which (to judge from some recent castings of that character) the very tradition must be worn out from the stage. No manager in those days would have dreamed of giving it to Mr. Baddeley, or Mr. Parsons; when Bensley was occasionally absent from the theatre, John Kemble thought it no derogation to succeed to the part. Malvolio is not essentially ludicrous. He becomes comic but by accident. He is cold, austere, repelling, but dignified, consistent, and, for what appears, rather of an overstretched morality. His dialect on all occasions is that of a gentleman and a man of education. We must not confound him with the eternal old, low steward of comedy. He is master of the household to a great princess, a dignity probably conferred upon him for other respects than age or length of service. Bensley, accordingly, threw over the part an air of Spanish loftiness. He looked, spake, and moved like an old Castilian. He was starch, spruce, opinionated, but his superstructure of pride seemed bottomed upon a sense of worth. There was something in it beyond the coxcomb. It was big and swelling, but you could not be sure that it was hollow. You might wish to see it taken down, but you felt that it was upon an elevation. He was magnificent from the outset; but when the decent sobrieties of the character began to give way, and the poison of self-love, in his conceit of the Countess’s affection, gradually to work, you would have thought that the hero of *La Mancha* in person stood before you. How he went smiling to himself! with what ineffable carelessness would he twirl his gold chain! what a dream it was! you were infected with the illusion! Who would not wish to live but for a day in the conceit of such

a lady's love as Olivia? Why, the duke would have given his principality but for a quarter of a minute, sleeping or waking, to have been so deluded. The man seemed to tread upon air, to taste manna, to walk with his head in the clouds, to mate Hyperion. I confess that I never saw the catastrophe of this character, while Bensley played it, without a kind of tragic interest. There was good foolery too.

*Dodd* Few now remember Dodd. In expressing slowness of apprehension this actor surpassed all others. You could see the first dawn of an idea stealing slowly over his countenance, climbing up by little and little, with a painful process, till it cleared up at last to the fulness of a twilight conception—its highest meridian. He seemed to keep back his intellect, as some have had the power to retard their pulsation. The balloon takes less time in filling than it took to cover the expansion of his broad moony face over all its quarters with expression. A glimmer of understanding would appear in a corner of his eye, and for lack of fuel go out again. A part of his forehead would catch a little intelligence, and be a long time in communicating it to the remainder. I am ill at dates, but I think it is now better than five-and-twenty years ago that, walking in the gardens of Gray's Inn, taking my afternoon solace on a summer day upon the terrace, a comely sad personage came towards me, whom, from his grave air and deportment, I judged to be one of the old Benchers of the Inn. He had a serious thoughtful forehead, and seemed to be in meditations of mortality. I was passing him with that sort of subindicative token of respect which one is apt to demonstrate towards a venerable stranger, and which rather denotes an inclination to greet him than any positive motion of the body to that effect, when the face turning full upon me strangely identified itself with that of Dodd. Upon close inspection I was not mistaken. But could this sad thoughtful countenance be the same vacant face of folly which I had hailed so often under circumstances of gaiety, which I had never seen without a smile, or recognised but as the usher of mirth, that looked out so formally flat in Foppington, so frothily pert in Tattle, so impotently busy in Backbite, so blankly divested of all meaning, or resolutely expressive of none, in Acres, in Fribble, and a thousand agreeable impertinences? There is something strange as well

as sad in seeing actors—your pleasant fellows particularly—subjected to and suffering the common lot—their fortunes, their casualties, their deaths, seem to belong to the scene, their actions to be amenable to poetic justice only. We can hardly connect them with more awful responsibilities. The death of this fine actor took place shortly after this meeting. He had quitted the stage some months, and, as I learned afterwards, had been in the habit of resorting daily to these gardens almost to the day of his decease.

*Suett* If few can remember Dodd, many yet living will not easily forget the pleasant creature who in those days enacted the part of the Clown to Dodd's Sir Andrew Richard, or rather Dicky Suett—for so in his lifetime he delighted to be called, and time hath ratified the appellation—lieth buried on the north side of the cemetery of Holy Paul, to whose service his nonage and tender years were dedicated. There are those who do yet remember him at that period—his pipe clear and harmonious. He would often speak of his chorister-days, when he was "Cherub Dicky." He was the Robin Good-Fellow of the stage. He came in to trouble all things with a welcome perplexity, himself no whit troubled for the matter. He was known, like Puck, by his note, "Ha' ha' ha'" sometimes deepening to "Ho' ho' ho'" with an irresistible accession, derived perhaps remotely from his ecclesiastical education, foreign to his prototype of "O la'." Thousands of hearts yet respond to the chuckling "O la'" of Dicky Suett, brought back to their remembrance by the faithful transcript of his friend Mathews's mimicry. The "force of nature could no further go." He drolled upon the stock of these two syllables richer than the cuckoo.

*Palmer.* The elder Palmer (of stage-treading celebrity) commonly played Sir Toby in those days, but there is a solidity of wit in the jests of that half-Falstaff which he did not quite fill out. He was as much too showy as Moody (who sometimes took the part) was dry and sottish. In sock or buskin there was an air of swaggering gentility about Jack Palmer. He was a *gentleman* with a slight infusion of the *footman*. His brother Bob (of recenter memory), who was his shadow in everything while he lived, and dwindled into less than a shadow afterwards, was a *gentleman* with a little stronger

infusion of the *latter ingredient*, that was all. It is amazing how a little of the more or less makes a difference in these things. When you saw Bobby in the Duke's Servant, you said, what a pity such a pretty fellow was only a servant. When you saw Jack figuring in Captain Absolute, you thought you could trace his promotion to some lady of quality who fancied the handsome fellow in his top-knot, and had bought him a commission. Therefore Jack in Dick Amlet was insuperable. Jack had two voices, both plausible, hypocritical, and insinuating; but his secondary or supplemental voice still more decisively histrionic than his common one. It was reserved for the spectator, and the *dramatis personæ* were supposed to know nothing at all about it. The *hes* of young Wilding, and the *sentiments* in Joseph Surface, were thus marked out in a sort of italics to the audience. This secret correspondence with the company before the curtain, which is the bane and death of tragedy, has an extremely happy effect in some kinds of comedy, in the more highly artificial comedy of Congreve or of Sheridan, especially where the absolute sense of reality so indispensable to scenes of interest is not required, or would rather interfere to diminish your pleasure. The fact is, you do not believe in such characters as Surface—the villain of artificial comedy—even while you read or see them.

*Munden*. Can any man wonder like him? Can any man see ghosts like him? or fight with his own shadow—"SESSA"—as he does in that strangely-neglected thing, "The Cobbler of Preston," where his alternations from the Cobbler to the Magnifico, and from the Magnifico to the Cobbler, keep the brain of the spectator in as wild a ferment as if some Arabian Night were being acted before him? Who like him can throw, or even attempt to throw, a preternatural interest over the commonest daily-life objects? A table or a joint-stool, in his conception, rises into a dignity equivalent to Cassiopeia's chair. It is invested with constellatory importance. So the gusto of Munden antiquates and ennobles what it touches. A tub of butter, contemplated by him, mounts to a Platonic idea. He understands a leg of mutton in its quiddity.

Colman gives this pleasant sketch of Bensley .

Bensley, while on the stage, married by *accident* He was travelling in a hack postchaise, which, on turning a sharp corner of the road near Bristol, came in violent contact with a lady on horseback The fair one was thrown ; the traveller leaped from his chaise to her assistance, in short, they became man and wife. His conjugal partner brought him 1500*l*. With this, and his income as an actor, they lived in frugal comfort, and in a select circle of acquaintance, distinct from his theatrical brethren, from whose society, it was occasionally remarked, he kept somewhat superciliously aloof, till he withdrew from his scenic labours in 1796 He was then appointed to the situation of a barrack - master by his friend Mr. Wyndham, who was at that period Secretary at War Some years before his death a large fortune was bequeathed to him by his relative, Sir William Bensley, a baronet, and an East India director Undazzled by riches, Bensley enjoyed his affluence with the liberal moderation of a perfect gentleman in the vale of existence, without children, and desirous only of a competent provision for his amiable and excellent wife. He declared that his superfluous wealth " came too late " His widow, who survived him some years, is now no more. In the earliest part of his theatrical life he lodged in the south-east Covent Garden Piazzas, which have been burnt down , and he there saved his life by jumping out of his bedroom window, on the first floor, during the conflagration. From the foregoing description of his starch manners, who would suppose that he was, in his youth, " an idle, flashy, young dog," and that Garrick had nicknamed him " Roaring Bob of the Garden ! "



## CHAPTER XI.

### MRS SIDDONS

AN event that should be noted marked the close of Garrick's connection with the theatre. This was the first appearance of Mrs Siddons in London. The incidents that led to this event were dramatic and interesting. Some aristocratic patiations had reported to Mr Garrick that there was a clever young actress at Cheltenham, and he despatched Mr King to report.

It would seem that he was not satisfied with the report of his agent King, but in the month of August, 1775, sent down a second emissary to make further observation.\* This was the Rev Mr Bate, a clergyman of strong intelligence, vigorous style, and of a strength of muscle still more vigorous, for he could box and bruise and fight duels, write "slashing" articles, and was, besides, well up in stage matters. His letters containing the report of his little expedition are to be found in the British Museum, and are singularly interesting and vivacious.

After travelling along "some of the cursedest cross-roads in the kingdom," the clergyman arrived at Worcester, and there saw "the theatrical heroine" for the first time, playing Rosalind. He stood at the side wings of the theatre, which he described as a sort of barn, the stage about three yards

\* I abridge this sketch from my "Lives of the Kembles"

wide Yet under these disadvantages he was enchanted with her playing She was, indeed, very close upon her confinement, but he pronounced that, making all allowance for her condition, she had ordinarily a very fine figure "Her face was one of the most strikingly beautiful for stage effect that I ever beheld, but I shall surprise you more when I assure you that these are nothing to her action and stage deportment, which are remarkably pleasing and characteristic At first it seemed to him that her voice was "rather dissonant," and "somewhat grating in the unimpassioned scenes," but this wore away. "She is a very good breeches figure Nay, he should not be surprised if, from her ease of figure and manner, she made the proudest she of either house tremble in genteel comedy Nay, beware yourself, great little man, for she plays Hamlet to the satisfaction of the Worcestershire critics" He then wrote a note to her husband, whom he describes as a "damned rascally player but a civil fellow," intimating his business, for he had heard that some Covent Garden emissaries were hanging about, and it was necessary to strike at once After the farce was over they both waited on him He found them very humble, and willing "to leave all and everything to Mr Garrick." She was diffident She had been on the stage from her very cradle, "which, though it surprised me, gave me the highest opinion of her judgment she had contracted no strolling habits" The company was to return to Worcester for the race week, when he was to see her again.

Two days later, namely, on August 19th, the agent wrote again The husband, Siddons, who seems to have been almost servile in his humility, only desired to be employed in any manner He was more tolerable as an actor than Mr Bate had thought at first It was evident, in short, that he wished to be "thrown in" with his wife "You can station him," says Mr Bate, "so as to satisfy the man without burdening the property" But a suspicion of the negotiation had been whispered, the manager was surly at his players being decoyed away, and refused to let her appear, but Mr. Bate was determined to persevere

When Mr Bate saw the pair again, all was arranged, but they submitted to Mr. Garrick some very modest requests, which they hoped he would be gracious enough to grant.

1st As they were ready to attend him at any moment, would he not be pleased "to allow them something to subsist upon when they came to London previous to their appearance. 2nd Whether he had any objection to employ *him* in any situation where he is likely to be useful" Mr Bate urged warmly that their requests should be granted, "for," he says, "it would be unjust not to remark one circumstance in favour of them both *I mean the universal good character they have possessed here for many years on account of their public as well as private conduct in life*" They were anxious also to know "when it was his wish that they should attend him." "I beg you," urged their warm advocate, Mr. Bate, "to be very particular as to this, that they may arrange their little matters accordingly." She was also "the most extraordinary quick study imaginable"

Siddons appears through the transaction as a rather poor and obsequious creature. He writes piteously to Bate about the delay. He had considered the matter concluded, and had given the manager notice, "so that if anything had happened and we had not been engaged it would have proved a very unlucky circumstance. However, sir, your letter hath removed my apprehensions and set me right again. I am very agreeable that Mrs Siddons should be brought to bed in the country"—this delicate matter having figured much in the negotiation, for Mr Garrick wished to open the season with his new actress. A month later her husband was able to write to Mr Garrick himself the joyful news "You will be surprised when I tell you she was brought to bed, having been taken ill unexpectedly when performing on the stage, and early next morning produced me a fine girl. Both are doing well." He begs to be allowed to stay a little while, "for Mrs Siddons counting so much longer than he had expected, he had left some private little matter undone. Most gratefully does he acknowledge Mr. Garrick's goodness, for he had just seen Mr. Dunwoody and had made bold to take 20l, which he hopes will meet his approbation." Unluckily, these delays prevented her appearance until the season had begun. The last letter in this interesting series is a dismal one. She had appeared at Drury Lane, and had failed. The news then spread of the change of proprietorship, and on February 9th, 1776,

Mr Siddons writes a timorous appeal to Mr Garrick "I make bold," he wrote, "to trouble you with an epistle in which I venture to solicit your friendship and endeavours for our continuance at Drury Lane. *We* have been doubly unfortunate at our onset in the theatre 1st. That particular circumstances prevented us from joining it at the proper time, and thereby rendered it impossible for *us* to be employed in the business of the season, when *our* utility might have been more observed" I cannot find Mr Siddons's name in any of the bills of the performances, so he must have been cast for some character scarcely rising above that of supernumerary. "2nd That we are going to be deprived of you as manager, and going to be left to those who perhaps may not have an opportunity this winter of observing us" There is a world of anxiety and suspense under these few lines. All they asked was a small sum, "no more than what I think we may decently subsist on, and appear with some credit to the profession—that is, 3*l* for Mrs Siddons, and 2*l* for myself This, I flatter myself, *we shall both* be found worthy of the first year, after that we shall wish to rise as *our merits* shall demand"

It is likely that Garrick had a personal regard for the new actress, and, had he remained, would certainly have brought her forward, if only to keep the other actresses in check But it is clear from Bates's report, "that she would make the proudest of them tremble in genteel comedy," that a miscalculation had been made, and, looking through the characters allotted to her, the same mistake continued As the phrase goes, she had not a chance She even appeared dressed up as a boy! Nearly all the critics were unfavourable It was scarcely wonderful, therefore, that the new management considered she had no particular claim to be retained on their establishment, and she returned to the provinces and to the Bath Theatre

Before Garrick thought of retiring, a very important remodelling and alteration of Drury Lane Theatre took place. A handsome front was built, designed by the Adamsons in their peculiar classical style. Within, the boxes were made "far

more spacious," the ceiling was heightened some twelve feet \* The style of decoration was not in the best taste

The pillars supporting the boxes and galleries are inlaid with plate-glass on a crimson-and-green ground, also ornamented with some well-fancied paintings. The boxes are lined with crimson-spotted paper, which, added to a light festooned curtain, affords great relief. New gilt chandeliers are fixed on to side pillars, and four fashionable chandeliers are placed in front.

With all this the building was in a state of decay, being, in fact, the old Drury Lane of Wien patched and repaired, and in a very few years it was found necessary to take it down altogether. To make these alterations Garrick prudently determined not to spend anything out of the profits, but to charge the establishment itself with the cost. He accordingly raised a sum of 12,000*l* by subscription, of which it was said the alterations would take 3000*l*, his share of the balance being 4500*l*, which he probably wanted for his new house in the Adelphi.

This admirable man died after a short retirement. It would be difficult to do justice to his character and accomplishments, apart even from his professional gifts. In all his letters there is a strain of sincerity, pleasant wit, good-humour, and sagacity that is extraordinary. His taste was admirable—shown not in the lavish outlay of the rich connoisseur, but with an unpretending certainty that rarely failed him †. Even this is shown in the choice of his two houses, both charming; that in the Adelphi on one of the most effective sites in London. His pictures, books, all show the same taste. He was certainly one of the most remarkable men the country has produced.

\* There are two large and finely-engraved prints representing the interior and exterior. In the latter a carriage is seen passing, at the window of which is seen Mr Garrick's face. The arrangement inside suggests that of the old Haymarket.

† Beside the writer, covering a sofa, is a piece of gay chintz, which was a portion of his window curtains at Hampton.

Mrs Garrick long survived, becoming almost a centenarian. There are those now alive who may have seen her. Quaint stories and odd letters occasionally reminded the public of her existence. Her will was not a little eccentric. It seems to clear up the debated point as to the source whence her fortune came, for she mentions a bond of 6000*l.* given by the Duke of Devonshire, on which he regularly paid the interest.



Period the Fifth.

FROM GARRICK'S RETIREMENT TO THE DAYS OF HUGE  
THEATRES.





## CHAPTER I

### SHERIDAN, MANAGER.

THE question now debated was, who was to come forward as the purchaser? When this became known, a singular offer was made to Mr. Garrick by Almacks, viz to secure him 10,000*l.* or “farm him” for that amount, if he would continue on the stage. It was curious, indeed, that he had never thought of working that great mine—of late years found so profitable to managers—viz the provinces. Since his first appearance, some thirty years before, he had played but two seasons out of London, and never since he had become a manager, except in recitations at Stratford With actors of less degree the custom had been coming in of playing at Bath and Dublin, and occasionally at some of the better houses on “the Circuit” Mr. Garrick, however, felt that he had made sufficient money.

He was at first anxious that George Colman should take his place, but the latter preferred the lighter duty of administering a small theatre Colman would have made an admirable manager, and would have carried on the hereditary traditions of management. Under his rule there would have been no disorders, no neglect of duty, no financial embarrassment He would have kept the whole together, and have transferred it, perhaps, to a worthy successor.

At this time, a clever young Irishman from Bath, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, had become celebrated by a romantic adventure, as well as by the successful production of a farcical comedy and a lively opera. He had married the celebrated Miss Linley, and had to win her, or rather secure her, by a desperate series of duels, and his plays had extraordinary success. He was, moreover, the son of a well-known actor. He succeeded in finding two friends to join him in offering to buy the share of Drury Lane that was for sale, viz his father-in-law, Dr. Ford, and Mr. Ewart, a City merchant 35,000*l.* was the sum to be found, of which he himself was to supply 10,000*l.* This he must have obtained after his usual fashion, viz by borrowing. Mr Ewart presently withdrew, and left the scheme to the three utterly inexperienced adventurers, who proposed to succeed one of the most skilful and judicious of English managers. There were great difficulties to be got over before the transaction was concluded. The truth was, Garrick had a high opinion of the clever young man whose pieces had drawn crowds to the other house, and declared that if he was complimented as "an Atlas," he left a "young Hercules" behind him to bear the weight of the administration. But Garrick, though he had a partner, was more deeply interested in the theatre than was supposed, he held a mortgage on Lacy's share of no less a sum than 22,000*l.*, his whole interest thus covering 57,000*l.* out of the 70,000*l.* at which it was valued. An octogenarian of the Sheridan family, who has written a life of his relative, states that Garrick also advanced Sheridan 8500*l.*, leaving him to find only 1500*l.*, taking his bond for the remainder, to be defrayed out of the current profits, and which, it is said, was so discharged during the first seasons.

The curious part of this transaction was the young Sheridan's eagerness to secure the whole interest in the

theatre. He was anxious to buy out Lacy and take his mortgage, so as to have the whole contract. The contract was perfected on June 24th, 1776, and the three ignorant and inexperienced managers started on their course. And yet, such was Sheridan's abilities and opportunities, that, had he shown prudence in money matters, the adventure might have proved successful. But almost at once the partners began to dispute. An agreement had been made with Lacy that no new partner should take the place of another without the approbation of the rest. It was discovered that Lacy had all but concluded a sale with his friends, Thompson and Langford. This they opposed, and the dispute ran so high that the theatre had to be shut up for two nights—ominous sign of disorder—and Lacy at last had to address the public in the papers, declaring that he believed he was acting within his rights, "but would yield to oblige his partners."

In 1778, however, Sheridan succeeded in getting rid of Lacy for the large sum of over 45,000*l*, a piece of reckless improvidence, and clearly more than his share was worth. But he was bent on gratifying his humour. Not content with this, he bought out Ford for 17,000*l*, and thus was left with his unlucky father-in-law, Linley, as virtually sole proprietor. Annuities, which after a time ceased to be paid, were the means by which they paid for their acquisition. Early signs of the want of judicious management soon appeared. It should be mentioned that a practice had latterly obtained that must, had it gone on longer, have seriously compromised the discipline of the theatre—that of advancing money to the improvident players, who had got largely into the books of the proprietors. This was an element in the contract with Sheridan, who agreed to take over these obligations. "Mr. Shuter (urged King in a grumbling letter to Garrick), at my salary nominally, had 100 guineas given him for signing

the article, *and some hundreds lent him*, which the manager, I believe, never expects to be repaid. Suffer me to say, I never have disputed your authority, *never have feigned illness*, or troubled you to rescue me from bailiffs or creditors."

One of the results naturally was a scandal before the audience. One night in April, 1772, Weston was to appear. He owed money to the theatre, "so the managers impounded the proceeds of his benefit." On this the player sent them word that he could not appear, as he had been arrested by the bailiffs. He begged, however, that no excuse of sickness would be made for him, as it would be a falsehood. Willing to gratify this praiseworthy and conscientious scruple, a general apology was made, when the unworthy actor started up in front of the upper gallery, where he was seated with a bailiff, and declared it was untrue—that he was there, and ready to play. This undignified proceeding led to a riotous interruption that lasted an hour, at the end of which he was permitted to play, the managers having to satisfy the officer. These disorders were bequeathed to the new managers, and added to the dissensions among the proprietors, leading to confusion behind the scenes and disrespect from the audience. Sheridan soon began to neglect rehearsals and supervision, and the actors, already inclined to take airs of independence, were not slow to take advantage of his carelessness. A single scene one night at Christmas, as the phrase runs, speaks volumes. "Much Ado about Nothing" was in the bills. At noon Henderson sent word to the theatre that he could not play. They hurried down to Covent Garden and obtained "the loan" of Lewis to supply his place. Soon after arrived a message from Parsons to the effect that *he* could not play. Moody was put into his part, and then, later, Vernon announced that *he* would not play. The prompter "thought himself very lucky in being able to stop all these serious gaps so happily." But during the first act he found that one La Mash, who did Borachio, had neither come

to his duty nor sent any excuse! There was no one to take the part, and they had to cut out his scenes altogether. There was a wretched house. "The School for Scandal" was down for the next night, and again Parsons could not play. No wonder the harassed prompter said they were in a dreadful situation. The worst symptom was the inferior player venturing on such liberties. What a change from the discipline of the late manager, under whose rule no one dared to have offered such disrespect to the public. Their only hope was in the pantomime, got up with gorgeous scenery, and the famous Grimaldi as clown. He was the very life and soul of it; but though galleries and pit were full, the boxes were thin.

Mr Garrick died on January 20th, 1779, and as his friend Johnson said justly, "eclipsed the gaiety of nations and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure." His retirement had been a series of ovations, during which he had presented most of his favourite characters. Friends came even from Paris to see him. During his twenty-nine years' management he is said to have accumulated a sum of 140,000*l.*, and living at all times at "no mean expense." Taking him for all in all, he was, as we have said, a truly remarkable man, distinguished as an author, actor, manager, business man, and a most agreeable and *recherché* member of society; the best of husbands, a just, honourable man, liberal in important things, for which he prepared himself by being careful (or penurious, his enemies said) in trifles.

Within the next few years the ranks of the drama were filled up by Miss Farren, Edwin, and Henderson, who all appeared at the Haymarket. But Garrick's loss was soon to be repaired, and two stars were to arise in the persons of Mrs Siddons\* and her brother, John Kemble. She appeared

\* It has often been noted how ineffectual mere description is in giving an idea of acting. The only approach is in good and sincere imitation. My

on October 12th, 1782, the Drury Lane management being lucky enough to secure her services. Her brother made his appearance the following year, on September 30th. The extraordinary success of this accomplished pair was as assured as it was lasting. It may be doubted if any female tragedian from any country has exceeded her in force and effect.

Another highly important addition to the stage was Mrs. Jordan, the unsurpassed hoyden of the stage, whose gaiety and sense of rustic fun was found irresistible. This, as is well known, was not her name, which was Francis, but one given her by the eccentric Tate Wilkinson.

The year 1781 witnessed the production, at Covent Garden, of the wonderful and truly admirable comedy, "The Man of the World"—wonderful because the work of so old a man as Macklin then was. It was the powerful work of a powerful mind, which triumphed over many obstacles. The terrible picture of a Scot alone was certain to raise up opposition, but I venture to say that a more masterly, fresh, and well-drawn character does not exist. "This play," says the author of the biography, "which in respect to originality, force of mind, and well-adapted satire, may dispute the palm with any dramatic piece that has appeared within the compass of half a century, was received with the loudest acclamations in Ireland about seventeen years before, under the title of 'The True-

friend, Mr Fladgate, well known as the friend of the Kemble family and of all that was dramatic in his day—himself an excellent and experienced critic—was not long since alluding to one of her famous bursts in "The Gamester," where, at the end, Beverley being charged with his villainies, she exclaims, "No It was *not* so! He could never," etc. This has often been described, but seemed to convey little idea. But catching enthusiasm from his recollections, her friend conveyed an admirable picture of the scene. She started from the ground, where she had been kneeling, there was an agitated struggle of words contending with each other, accompanied by a frantic gesture to supply their want. Then, with a hysterical sort of passionate remonstrance, as though calling on all the world to hear her, she seemed with a piteous vehemence to plead for him. "N—o—o (this a sort of shriek), it was *not*!" etc.

boin Scotchman,' in three acts. In London, however, an official leave for its exhibition was repeatedly denied ; and our audiences are indebted for the pleasure they have since derived from it to the death of Mr Capell, the late sub-licenser of the Theatres Royal. This scrupulous petty placeman had long preferred what he conceived to be the bias of a Court to the innocent gratification of the public. His sagacity on a former occasion, also, should not be forgotten. He once prohibited the rehearsal of an opera because he thought the situation of Pharnaces too nearly resembled that of the Young Pretender, nor, till a minister of state interposed his authority, would our guardian eunuch of the stage indulge the lovers of music with this favourite entertainment. Provident dulness could have dug no deeper grave for its literary remains. The wonderful old man (Macklin) performed the leading character himself with infinite spirit and breath."



## CHAPTER II

### THE REBUILDING OF DRURY LANE THEATRE.

THE month of June, 1787, was to witness the first stirrings of serious revolt against the principle of the patent monopoly, and therefore marks an era of great importance. Though the attempt was defeated for the time, it was certainly a substantial one, and brought the question, to use a well-known phrase, within the domain of practical politics. Mr John Palmer had conceived the idea of erecting a new playhouse, and assuming the most extraordinary and baseless hypothesis that was ever used to support a speculation, obtained the money and proceeded to build his house. He selected the quarters where the old Goodman's Fields Theatre stood, being Wellclose Square. He chose to take for granted that some magistrates of this district being willing to grant him a licence, and the governor of the Tower giving his sanction as from one of the royal palaces, his authority was complete. The Royalty Theatre accordingly rose from its foundation, to the satisfaction of the inhabitants and taverns, and houses of call were soon established about it. The foundations were laid with great pomp, processions, etc., and the whole was nearly completed and ready for opening when the patentees unmasked their batteries, and a notice came from the Drury Lane, and

Covent Garden, and Haymarket patentees declaring they would suffer no infringement of the patent Palmer had actually engaged Garrick, Johnstone, Mrs Wells, and others, and had made preparations for a regular dramatic season. Appeals were made to the public, the usual "case" was drawn up; but the patentees were resolute, and the new manager had the mortification of being obliged to open his theatre for one night for a charity, so as to escape the penalties of the law, and of closing it immediately. He had to content himself with a speech. Nothing more rash or unbusinesslike could be pointed out even in the annals of theatrical management. The case seemed hard; but, before venturing on such a step, he should have made sure of his ground. Counsel's opinion—that of the well-known Mr. Bearcroft—was taken as to playing burlettas, farces, etc. Nothing could be shorter or more simple than the response

I am of opinion that no licence under the 26 Geo. II. c. 36, can authorise the performance of any entertainments of the kind described in the query, and falling within the meaning of the 10 Geo., and consequently that the performers in such entertainments will be liable to be proceeded against under the last-mentioned Statute and that of 17 Geo. II. I am aware that the practice has been otherwise, but I have always thought it illegal.

EDWARD BEARCROFT

Lincoln's Inn, June 29th, 1787.

A simple reference to the Act of Geo. II. is clear even to a layman

No person shall for hire, gain, or reward, act, represent, or perform, or cause to be acted, etc etc any interlude, tragedy, comedy, *play, farce, or other entertainment of the stage*, except under a patent from the Crown, or a licence from the Lord Chamberlain, as by said Act is provided.

To the layman of "good common sense" nothing can be clearer than the meaning of an entertainment of the stage,'

which distinguishes all with a dramatic element from a mere *show*. Thus, dancing, as an exhibition of steps and movement, is tolerated, but a ballet, in which a story is told by dancing, would be "an entertainment of the stage." Some indulgence seems to have been shown Palmer, and he was permitted to give a course of musical pieces, pantomimes, etc. But the struggle was carried on in an intermittent manner until the patentees showed they were not to be trifled with, and were determined to assert their rights. He was summoned before the justices, who were determined to commit him to prison if he did not produce his authority. This characteristic scene followed.

The parties met in an upstairs room of the tavern, and Palmer's dexterity did not desert him. He assured them that "the papers were at his lodgings, but a street's length off, and if they would allow him, he would go himself for them, and be back in two minutes." To this there was a ready assent on the part of the magistracy. Palmer treated the party with his usual bow of humility, turned up the whites of his eyes, and bid "God Almighty bless them for their kindness!" He retired in haste, and shut the door after him, but, as the key was outside of it, he very gently turned it in the lock, and, without the slightest noise in withdrawing it, put the key into his pocket. The party waited with growing impatience, and time had elapsed beyond all reasonable limit. The bell was rung. The waiter knocked at the door, and it was then found that they had been imprisoned.

A more serious and oppressive step was then taken, when Palmer and Bannister were actually committed "as rogues and vagabonds," and imprisoned for fourteen days. An application was made to his patrons, two friendly justices of the Tower Hamlets, who discharged him. But they, in their turn, were brought before the superior courts; for in May, 1789, Mr. Justice Ashurst, giving them a reprimand,

sentenced both to a fine of 100*l* or imprisonment, besides being superseded. These harsh acts were effectual, though an appeal was made to Parliament by way of petition, which, curious to say, was stoutly opposed by Fox. This stroke was followed up by laying an information against Delpini, the clown, who had broken silence in the pantomime and uttered two words "Roast beef!" Still at this time another insidious attack was made on the patent, and Sadler's Wells obtained leave to play a certain kind of entertainment. There were other proceedings later in the case of the Royal Circus, in 1791, when Palmer and Bannister were again convicted, and the conviction affirmed upon appeal.

From the appendix to the "Account of the Proceedings before the Privy Council on a petition for a third theatre" in 1810, I take the following, from which it will be seen that one of the Vanburgh family was still alive

On the faith of this security—and it seemed a large and encouraging one—Mr Taylor had been induced to enter on his operatic speculation. The extraordinary recklessness which attended this lyrical venture was never better illustrated than by the story which he himself unfolded to the Privy Council in 1810.

The petition of William Taylor, Esq., proprietor of the King's Theatre, or opera house, in the Haymarket, humbly sheweth, that your petitioner having learnt from the public prints that an application had been made to your Majesty for the erection of a third theatre, in addition to those of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, conceives it to be an act of justice to himself and the other persons interested in the King's Theatre or opera house, to state the grounds of his objections to the establishment of such theatre. That your petitioner became possessed twenty-nine years ago of the property of the said opera house, which was unfortunately consumed by fire in the month of June, 1789. That your petitioner rebuilt the present theatre in the following year (1790), and having provided the

usual company of singers and dancers, he made the customary application to the Lord Chamberlain for the usual licence to carry on operas, which, however, was refused, upon the pretext that a licence for the same purpose had been previously granted to a Mr. O'Reilly, who had then recently fitted up the Pantheon, in Oxford Street, as a theatre; in consequence of which refusal, and being unable to open the present opera house for Italian operas, your petitioner lost above 9700*l.* in the winter of the year 1791

That the said Mr O'Reilly having, within the same year, contracted debts at the Pantheon Theatre to the amount of 30,000*l.*, and having, in consequence thereof, left the kingdom, a negotiation was set on foot with those principally concerned with Mr O'Reilly in that enterprize, who were His Grace the late Duke of Bedford, and the then Lord Chamberlain (the Marquis of Salisbury), for the restoration not only of the former licence, but even for a patent and permanent exclusive right to carry on Italian operas at the said theatre in the Haymarket, which was brought to a conclusion in the autumn of 1791, under the auspicious mediation of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, the said late Duke of Bedford, and the said Lord Chamberlain, who respectively sanctioned the same with the signature of their names thereto, and which was called, "An Outline for a General Opera Arrangement," in which also the interests of the said two theatres in Covent Garden and in Drury Lane were comprehended

That by the said arrangement it was (among other things) stipulated and agreed, that your petitioner should take upon himself, and secure upon the said Haymarket Theatre, by yearly payments, for the term of fifteen years, the said sum of 30,000*l.* of debts so contracted at the said Pantheon Theatre, and which sum your petitioner fully paid and satisfied in the year 1796, without waiting for the stipulated instalments; and it was likewise by the said arrangement, which was considered as a recognition of the said three theatres, and the monopoly thereto belonging, that in order to extinguish the risk of the establishment of a third English playhouse, that the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre and your petitioner should give the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre a compensation, to put at rest what was called the dormant or third patent; and it

was accordingly agreed that the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre should pay in respect of such compensation the sum of 11,500*l*. (and which they did actually pay), and that your petitioner should pay 5000*l*, other part thereof, to be charged upon the said theatre in the Haymarket, which was agreed to

That although it was not in the said theatrical arrangement expressly stipulated that no third theatre should ever be established, it was certainly understood at the time by your petitioner, and by all the said other proprietors of the two other theatres, that if ever such third theatre should become necessary, it would be established under the authority of the said dormant patent, and for the benefit of all the said proprietors and your petitioner, in the proportion of their interests therein, otherwise your petitioner never would have agreed to pay either the said 30,000*l* (which he always considered as a great hardship, not to call it an act of injustice), or the said other sum of 5000*l* towards the said compensation

That your petitioner was the more induced to place implicit reliance upon the good faith of the said arrangement, sanctioned as it was by personages of such exalted rank and consideration, inasmuch as the whole of it was done subject to the King's approbation, and which His Majesty was graciously pleased to bestow upon it, and upon the faith of which, and of the understanding of it now stated by your petitioner, he thinks no less than 250,000*l*. have been embarked in the said two theatres of Drury Lane and that of the said Opera House in the Haymarket, and all of which your petitioner is fully persuaded will be most materially injured, etc

In December, 1790, one of the most remarkable and effective comedians of the English stage made his appearance at Drury Lane, Joseph Munden. This performer for breadth and humour has not been exceeded on the English stage, and he was moreover one of the few that, arriving from the provinces to town, made a conspicuous and striking success. He came after Edwin, who had been much cherished. His mind, as Mr. Boaden says, seemed teeming with every surprise of comic humour, which

his features expressed by an incessant diversity of playful action, and his utterance conveyed in an articulation of much force and neatness.

Six years later, in 1796, came Dowton, another comedian of excellence. Nearly at the same time appeared Elliston, the future comedian of the rival theatre

"Little Quick, the retired Diocletian of Islington, with a squeak like a Bartholomew fiddle," could have boasted to many even now living that he had been the original Tony Lumpkin and Bob Acres. He left the stage in 1796, taking with him, it is said, 10,000*l*. He lived in Hornsey (or Will's) Row, Islington, and was fond of joining in public-house convivial meetings. He was often to be seen in his peculiar dress, a blue coat and basket buttons, a white waistcoat, black smalls, silk stockings, and silver buckles. He lived to an advanced age, dying in 1831, more than eighty years old.

Within two years two theatrical monuments associated with many interesting memories were to be lost to the city. These were the old Opera-house of Vanbrugh and Drury Lane Theatre.

On the 17th of June, 1789 (says Boaden in a picturesque account), I was on my return from a visit, crossing the Park from Buckingham Gate to Stable Yard, St. James's, when this most tremendous conflagration burst upon me, it seemed to make the long lines of trees in the Mall wave in an atmosphere of fire. As I approached the spot, the consternation appeared to settle nearly in the eyes—little motion in the crowd; all gaze, all wonder. The fire had commenced in the flies, and burst through the roof in a column of confirmed fierceness. In the theatre, about ten o'clock, they had been rehearsing a ballet, and the first alarm was occasioned by the sparks of fire which fell upon the heads of the dancers. Madame Ravelli was with difficulty saved by one of the firemen; Madame Gunnard lost a slipper, but escaped in safety. Little or nothing was saved of the property in the theatre, and a perhaps moderate estimate computed the loss at 70,000*l*.

This was the theatre built by Sir John Vanbrugh, and finished in 1706. It was a grand palatial structure, and bore the usual evidences of Vanbrugh, not as a poet, but architect; heaviness and dignity, projection and force.

A descendant of Sir John Vanbrugh enjoyed 800*l*. per year from this property, and the late King, in consideration for this gentleman, had interfered to prevent a new opera-house from being erected on another spot. The night was so still and calm that the contiguous houses in Pall Mall were saved. I saw Mr. Burke standing close to the scene, seemingly delighting in the energy and skill with which the Bridewell Boys served their first-rate engine in the place of honour, that is, of greatest peril. At Carlton House the proper vigilance was used to avert danger from the showers of fire, which were falling through the night. The supply of water could have been but scanty, for at twelve o'clock of the following day the fire was at the back of the opera-house, burning like a furnace. It was, at the time, considered to be the work of some diabolical malice, and a death-bed confession was once repeated to me that revealed the name of the incendiary.

This serious loss of the opera-house nearly shipwrecked the fashionable attractions of the town. The same writer looks back fondly to those old glories of Vanbrugh's house. He tells us how Cramer led, and Sir John Gallini engaged, the artistes, including that famous Marchesi whose male soprano would not be tolerated now, but enchanted all then.

He says.

The high life assembled in our opera-house is itself the most captivating of all sights. In a multitude of instances, the predecessors of our reigning beauties were of a grander form, and their deportment was fashioned in a finer school. The exterior was at once stately and gracious. I remember when we waited, as for a triumph, to see the Devonshires or the Rutlands walk down the opera stairs to their carriages.

The year 1792 witnessed the production of a good comedy by one of the most painstaking literary drudges



and fertile playwrights of his day, Thomas Holcroft. He was born in a wretched court off Leicester Square, and was afterwards employed in racing stables at Newmarket. His father was a shoemaker, and his son also adopted this trade and followed it till he was five-and-twenty. He then took to the stage, and was encouraged by Foote and Macklin; but making a success with a piece called "Duplicity," he gave up acting and became a dramatist, with which he joined the then dangerous calling of a Radical. Translations from the French was his mode of action, but he thoroughly knew the stage. Of his pieces, thirty or forty in number, only one keeps the stage, viz "The Road to Ruin," though there are others of merit, such as "The Deserted Daughter." But his translated works show the most prodigious industry—the writings of Voltaire, of Frederick the Great, etc. being all rendered by him into English in a very short time. He voluntarily surrendered to take his trial, in 1794, on a charge of treason and sedition, but was passed over. A most remarkable man altogether.

Sheridan, whose wonderful feats in the way of conjuring up sums of money might be thought to have found a limit, was now preparing a very bold and magnificent scheme. He had already begun to neglect his theatre. He would come occasionally, full of wine, behind the scenes, ask some of his own actors, "Who was that on the stage?" and say, "Never let him play again." Kemble had become his stage-manager in 1789, in succession to the veteran King, who issued a proclamation to the public explaining why he retired. This judicious step at last restored order, but the actor was to find that he had embarked on a troubled undertaking, owing to the extraordinary uncertainty and loose habits of his principal.

Many reasons, no doubt, concurred to influence Sheridan to take the step he was meditating, that of erecting an entirely

new theatre The old one was certainly past repairs or alterations, but there can be little doubt that the real motive was the certainty of vast receipts to be gained by a huge theatre having double the capacity of the old one. It is but fair, however, to remember that the enterprise had vast powers of expansion, and the value of the patents was steadily growing As he said himself, he might point to the increased prices he had had to pay for his successive purchases. He had bought Garrick's share when the whole was valued at 70,000*l.*, Lacy's at the rate of 94,000*l.*, Ford's at 86,000*l.* Then consideration was to be had for the development of London players, who were increasing rapidly Higher salaries were being demanded, which could only be met by the receipts from increased accommodation The mode of seven or eight rows of the pit being "laid into boxes," an encroachment now of ordinary and permanent occurrence, according to the attraction of the piece for the *beau monde*, was then attempted on a rare benefit-night—such as was done at Mrs Siddons's last benefit, when 412*l.* was taken at the doors. It will be seen later at what a heavy sacrifice these more sordid advantages were to be obtained, and that the result was the killing of the dramatic goose to secure a few golden eggs.

The adroit Sheridan, who, whenever his own interests were concerned, was active, knew how to use his political interest in favour of his theatre To this, no doubt, was owing Fox's opposition to the Royalty, and we now find him contriving to fortify still more his already secure patent When the money came to be raised for the new house, it was naturally asked "*What had become of Killygrew's patent?*" which, indeed, had not been heard of for nearly a century. Covent Garden, it was assumed, was being carried on under Davenant's patent, Drury Lane under the again and again renewed Steele's patent What was to prevent some bold speculator securing

the unused Killigrew document and starting a rival venture? Inquiries were made and counsels' opinions taken. It was ascertained that the patent still remained in the hands of Rich's successors, either unused or used in connection with the other. However, to make all sure, and fortify the Drury Lane security now to be offered, it was resolved to purchase it. A curious bargain was made. The Prince of Wales was much interested in the new opera-house, and it was proposed that, if a monopoly were assured to it of opera (Drury Lane craving the right to play opera), the King, Prince of Wales, and Lord Chamberlain would all join in an arrangement that would assure the theatre its monopoly, "and that no countenance would be given to another rival attempt." Accordingly, the enormous sum of 60,000*l* was to be paid for this defunct patent! But of this later.

The complicated questions involved in patent rights seemed to grow more numerous with time. One of the most curious was this very one concerning the fate and position of a *disused* patent. As the Crown had begun to issue licences—finding this a convenient and handy engine of control—it seemed to be inclined to set aside the original patents as making the holders too independent, and giving them powers too large. But after the two patents had been united, or rather the two companies under the patent, and these again had broken up, the system of issuing licences came into vogue. After a lapse of years, the question was, whether the holder of the patent was playing under a single patent, and whether the other was dormant or merged. This was an unfortunate point, as on it depended the possibility of starting a new undertaking at any moment. The point remained in suspense for many years, but it would appear that at one period Rich was actually conducting two theatres, Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields, under the two

patents. In 1793 the eminent counsel Hargrave brought his clear intellect to bear on the question, and put the matter in a most convincing light. It was urged, he said, by other counsel, that there had been actually and uninterrupted joint exercise of the two patents for one hundred and ten years, and that after so long a union, "the powers of the patent to Killigrew are not exercisable separately." But the truth was, this dormancy was not nearly so long, there having been a separate exercise of the two patents for nearly ten years, viz from 1732 to 1741, during which time Rich kept two theatres open "without the least interruption or question." In a second opinion, given later, he goes deeper into the matter. He says, very justly, "that the matter of the Crown's power is delicate, that it has been the custom of counsel to avoid looking further than to the derivation of titles from the original patentees." In this view nothing could be pronounced sounder. Counsel had approved of the titles in 1767, when Mr. Harris and his partners bought of Rich and his devisees. So again in 1784, when it was investigated for the satisfaction of Mr Harris's "tontine annuitants." Further, no interference or opposition of the Crown could be anticipated, owing to the plan for transferring the dormant patent being approved of in a marked way. This was on the occasion of the "opera-house arrangement" in this very year, 1793, when this transfer of the dormant patent to Drury Lane was formally sanctioned by the Prince of Wales, being actually signed by him according to the sixth article, by which Mr Harris is to be compensated for the dormant patent. The Haymarket Theatre was to contribute 5000*l*, and all further expense was to be borne by Drury Lane Theatre on receiving this (dormant) patent. The King's approbation is shown by a letter of the Lord Chamberlain's, dated February 24th last. In this, the opera-house trustees, state the arrangement had been made before His

Majesty's disapproving of it. This negative measure is, it seems, the usual mode of signifying the royal approbation.

Outline for a general opera arrangement proposed by Messrs. Sheridan, Holloway, and William Sheldon, with the approbation of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, His Grace the Duke of Bedford, and the Marquis of Salisbury.

1st Mr Vanburgh's interest in the Haymarket Theatre, and property to be purchased of him, and to be vested in trustees, upon the trusts hereinafter mentioned, and subject thereto, in trust for those friends of Mr. Taylor who purchased Mr Vanburgh's interest, who may at the same moment agree with Mr Taylor for the granting him a new lease, at the expiration of the present one, either for the same rent as is now paid, or for any other rent as shall be agreed upon between them for the whole of Mr Vanburgh's present term under the Crown, as also for any new term that he may obtain.

2nd Mr Vanburgh to use and exert his utmost interest with the Crown for the obtaining such an addition to the subsisting lease as will make up fifty years.

3rd. The consideration to Mr. Vanburgh to be 12,000*l* to be paid down, and an annuity of 400*l* to be reserved to Mr Vanburgh during his life, and also to Mrs Vanburgh during her life, if she survive him, and (except the Crown rent) to be the first charge upon the property, unless otherwise to his satisfaction provided for, and the 3500*l*. insurance money to be released to him. Mr Vanburgh remitting to Mr Taylor all arrears of rent now due to him, with a reservation of all such right of admission, and of silver tickets, during this present term under the Crown, as he at present is entitled to, as also to Mr. De Burgh of his silver ticket, and if a future term is obtained by Mr. Vanburgh's interest, the same privilege to be continued.

4th All parties to unite in an application to the Crown for a patent for operas only, under the control of the Lord Chamberlain, for the term of twenty-one years, to be obtained in such name as shall most facilitate the obtaining the same, and by the patentee to be assigned to the trustees of the whole property upon the trusts hereinafter mentioned, and the patent subject thereto, to be the property of Mr. Taylor.

5th Any expense attending the obtaining of a patent from the Crown to be borne by the Haymarket Theatre

6th It having been agreed on all sides that Mr Harris should derive a just compensation, in respect to his dormant patent, from the Haymarket property, at the same time the various and necessary charges laid on this theatre, rendering it very desirable that the arbitrator should add as little as possible to those expenses, it is agreed that the Haymarket Theatre shall be charged only with an annuity of 250*l* redeemable for 5000*l*. towards that compensation, and that all further expenses attending the settlement with Mr Harris shall be borne by the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre, upon the said dormant patent being annexed inseparably to that theatre, with the consent of the Duke of Bedford.

7th In this case it is to be understood as a part of the settlement, *bonâ fide* between the three theatres, that the patents of Drury Lane and Covent Garden shall never be exercised for the performance of Italian operas, and that the Haymarket Theatre and patent shall be for Italian operas only with such occasional aid as has been usual from balls and masquerades

8th The management to be given up to the direction of five noblemen, to be named by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Bedford, and the Marquis of Salisbury, with no other restriction than that the expense shall not exceed the sum of 21,000*l* annually, including rent and taxes

9th The subscription to be raised to 25 guineas for fifty operas only The performances to commence so as to have sixty performances in the season, unless prevented by extraordinary circumstances.

10th The appropriation of the forty-one boxes to remain as settled in the deed with Gallini, but the consideration given for those boxes to be proved to the trustees, and if an adequate consideration has not been given, the deficiency to be made good, or the box to be given up to the trustees, on the repayment of the consideration given And all other demands upon either property to be submitted to investigation and proof before they can be admitted as charges upon the trust

11th. The proprietors of these forty-one boxes to be treated with, for the purchase of a further term in them, so as to raise a sum of 16,000*l* or 20,000*l*, one moiety of which to be applied in payment of the Pantheon creditors, and the other to those of the Haymarket

12th The annual surplus, above the sum allowed for the expenditure of the establishment, to be disposed of in the following manner

13th 1500*l*. per annum to be applied to pay off Gallini the sum of 8500*l* secured to him by the deed above-mentioned

14th 1000*l* per annum to finish the building, according to the plan begun by Mr Taylor, but with the approbation of the five directing noblemen

15th Any sum, not exceeding 4000*l* yearly, to be divided between the Pantheon and Haymarket creditors

16th An annuity of 200*l* to be given, during life, to such persons lately interested in the Pantheon Theatre as the Duke of Bedford and Marquis of Salisbury shall approve of

17th A proper trust to be created, and three trustees to be named for these purposes, and all receipts and profits of the theatre, and property in the Haymarket, to be paid to the account of the trustees, and at the bankers approved of, and subject to the purposes of the trust

18th Mr Taylor to have the free use of the house for three nights in the course of the season, not interfering with the opera nights

19th Mr Taylor to recommend a banker and receivers, subject to the approbation of the five directing noblemen, who must have the power of removing them at their discretion, and of taking such security as they judge proper

20th Mr Taylor to be at liberty to insure the theatre and property from fire, to the full value of the same, provided that the policies be lodged with the banker to the fund in the names of the trustees; and that within thirty days previous to the expiration of any policy he do produce and lodge with the banker of the fund the new policies in the names of the trustees, in failure of which the trustees are immediately to insure. The expense, in either case, to come out of the

general fund, into which all money recovered on any policies is to be paid

21st Any surplus, beyond the several yearly sums and expenses above provided for, to be paid to Mr Taylor

22nd The Pantheon Opera debts are estimated by Mr William Sheldon at 40,000*l*, but supposed to be reduceable to 30,000*l*. Let them be taken on the Haymarket property at 30,000*l*, without interest or farther detail. If they do not exceed that sum, then any profits which may arise this season from the Pantheon to go in reduction of it. But if they do exceed 30,000*l*, then the profits to be applied in addition to that sum

23rd Twenty-four boxes to be allotted in the first, second, and third tiers in the Haymarket Theatre for the disposition of the Duke of Bedford and the Marquis of Salisbury, and for the accommodation of their friends, subscribers to the Pantheon, who now have no boxes in the Haymarket Theatre.

24th The Pantheon to be dismantled and restored as soon as the Haymarket Theatre is fit

25th The Theatre Royal in Drury Lane to be rebuilt with all possible expedition, but if not completed so as to admit the re-establishment of the opera at the Haymarket Theatre at the beginning of the next season, then the profits of the Pantheon to be continued to be applied in discharge of the Pantheon debts, and the rent of the Haymarket paid by the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre to be applied in reducing those of the Haymarket Theatre

26th The three trustees to be named, one by Messrs. Sheridan and Holloway, on the part of the Haymarket, one by Mr. Sheldon, on the part of the Pantheon, and one by the five directing noblemen

27th To be referred to John Maddocks, Esq, and Arthur Piggett, Esq, to prepare a proper deed for the carrying the above outline into execution, and in which deed are to be inserted all such clauses, provisions, and declarations as in their opinion shall be proper or necessary for effecting the trusts proposed, and securing the rights and interests of the several parties, according to the true spirit and meaning of this outline and of the arbitiators



28th Messrs. Maddocks and Piggott, with such assistance as they shall appoint, to receive and investigate the proofs of the titles to the boxes and the claims on the trust.

29th The whole property, after all the objects of the trust are satisfied, to be Mr Taylor's

30th. The trust to be for ten years, but if the objects of the trust should not be satisfied in that term, then to be renewed.

31st Every part of this arrangement to be subject to His Majesty's approbation.

We recommend the above outline as a just and honourable settlement for all parties

Signed by R B SHERIDAN,  
THOS HOLLOWAY  
WM SHELTON

We approve of the same,  
Signed by GEORGE P  
BEDFORD  
SALISBURY

It was evident, in short, that his opinion was that the patents were a mode of monopoly scarcely arguable at law, but which it would be difficult to overturn. But this was to turn up once more, some forty years later, under Mr. Bunn's reign

The rumours (he says) which had been at various times afloat respecting the existence of Killgrew's patent, some asserting that it perished in the fire of 1809 which destroyed Drury Lane Theatre, others that it was in pawn with certain bankers for certain sums of gold, others that it never existed at all, were at the beginning of this season (1837-38) silenced altogether. The running patent of George III, granted in 1816, had expired the beginning of September this year, 1837. When informed that I opened the Theatre Royal Drury Lane under Killgrew's patent, I was called upon to produce it. I might have refused, because it was the bounden duty of the Lord Chamberlain's people to know of its disposition, but to prevent any confusion I appised the gentleman *who wanted upon me that its purchase from the Covent Garden proprietors was completed on the 17th of December, 1813, by the payment*

of a balance of 9561*l* 19*s.* 5*d.* due to them thereon, and producing a tin box entrusted to me for the occasion, by that valuable index to all such matters, Mr Dunn, I displayed before the wondering eyes of the disappointed official the document itself, bearing the signature of "Howard," with the appendage of his lordship's ponderous seal of power

Not the least difficulty was found by the manager in obtaining the sum necessary, viz 150,000*l*\* On June 4th, 1791, the last performance was given, and then the demolition commenced The loss of so old a memorial was to be lamented, associated as it was with so many glories, and with the names of the Bettertons, Booths, Bracegirdles, Porters, Garricks, and other famous personages.

While the theatre was rebuilding the company removed to the new opera-house in the Haymarket The opera company had for a time moved to another temple of amusement,† conceived in a stately, sumptuous, and architectural spirit Nowadays our places of amusement lack this bold conception and fine lines, and the poverty of thought displayed in the new theatres is overlaid with gilding and gaudiness By the strangest fatality this monument was to be destroyed in January, 1792, also by fire, and, as another theatre at Manchester was consumed by the same element, it was scarcely surprising that incendiarism was suggested as the cause.

The new theatre was opened on April 21st, 1794 It was an imposing-looking structure as regards its size, the length of its *façades*, and the long rows of windows, offering rather a barracklike aspect. It fronted Russell Street, down which at

\* There were 1500 shares of 100*l* The terms are stated in the particulars of a new Reuter's Share, sold by auction on October 23rd, 1794 It was for 100 years, paying to the holder 2*s* 6*d* for every theatrical or musical performance, and free admission into any part of the house, behind the scenes alone excepted

† The splendour of the Pantheon is shown in a series of noble plates published at the time The architect was Mr Wyatt

present runs the long colonnade of its successor. It also had a colonnade, while above its *façade* a great central block was elevated, and above all rose conspicuously a sort of pedestal or pillar crowned by a statue of Apollo with his lyre, which could be seen from a great distance—thus anticipating the mode in which the new French Opera-house is now adorned. It was, indeed, a vast pile—it was about double the capacity in size and profit of Garrick's theatre. The dimensions were length, from east to west, 320 ft., breadth, from north to south, 155 ft., width of roof, 118 ft. The new Drury Lane was also planned with the same view, and calculated for an audience valued at 7000. I quote from "Lives of the Kembles"

The architect was Mr. Holland, who had recently remodelled Covent Garden Theatre. For vastness of size, at least, it was considered almost the finest theatre in Europe. There was a surprising loftiness about the interior, though the malicious likened it to a great birdcage, owing to the fashion in which the dividing lines of the boxes converged at the centre of the ceiling. There were tiers upon tiers of boxes, with great galleries and a spacious amphitheatre near the roof, all arranged with a novel solidity of construction. This might be thought satisfactory, but such advantages were dearly purchased by the certain destruction of fine acting and proscription of fine dramas, for on this occasion was inaugurated the principle that the performers and performance must suit the theatre, while the theatre itself must suit speculation. In Garrick's Drury Lane Theatre the two rows of boxes were open galleries rather than boxes, and the amphitheatre, or two-shilling gallery, was brought boldly down into the centre of the second row of boxes. He knew how to value the encouragement of these trusty supporters; for the rude but intelligent appreciation of a vast mass of human beings, who could see, and hear, and understand what was going on, was most valuable to the actors. Every whisper, every glance could be understood in those regions, and this feeling influenced the finest exertions of the players. In the old theatre, too, the arrange-

ment that brought the stage-doors and the foremost "wings" well forward into the house, was most advantageous for the "exit" of the actor, giving him scope for some of the finest bits of playing, for what was called "springing off with a glance at the pit," by which defiant and hateful villains could retire from view with true dramatic force, whereas the greater space to be travelled over under the new arrangement obliged them to have recourse to stage artifices to sustain the effect. In the new houses the gallery audience was sent away aloft, and put far back, where they had, at most, but distant glimpses, and could hear nothing that was not declaimed loudly. But their position was favourable compared to what it was to be later. In the other parts of the houses many could neither see nor hear without exertion, and they also exhibited a new and objectionable feature—the private boxes suited for opera, but not for dramatic performances.

"Macbeth" was selected for this inauguration, which took place on March 12th, 1794. To reassure the audience, a huge iron curtain was let down and ostentatiously struck with a hammer. When this screen was raised, a lake of real water was discovered, on which a man rowed about in a boat, with a cascade tumbling down behind. While Miss Farren was put forward to deliver a boastful challenge to the powers of fire

In ample reservoirs our firm reliance,  
Whose streams set conflagrations at defiance

The great audience was delighted. Enormous exertions had been made to set off Shakespeare's play, even the great actress herself wrote to her friend Lady Harcourt "I am told that the banquet is a thing to go and see of itself. You cannot conceive what I feel at the prospect of playing there." Up to this day such a sentiment had never been heard, people might go to see a Garrick and Pritchard, or Siddons and Kemble, in *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*, but no stage-manager had yet dreamed of elaborating "a banquet-scene," the cups, meats, guests, etc., so as to make it a marked feature. Almost on the first night she must have discovered that her powers were subjected to altogether new conditions. Soon a change in her style, and that of all the greater players, was noticed, her acting became "larger" and coarser to aid distant effects; her

gestures and poses became bolder and more theatrical, and of course less spontaneous. There was to be a long farewell to those delicate graces, to those electrical changes of expression, now to be lost, in a great measure, on the bulk of the audience.

Sir Walter Scott recalled this house and its later appearance, when it was often half empty, as a huge "Dom-Daniel"—for this was incident to temples of this great size, that some great attraction was always necessary to bring nearly four thousand people together. And it is certainly not a little curious to contrast a later declaration of Mrs Siddons, made after due experience, with her pleasant anticipation written to Lady Harcourt. Dowton used to tell how she said to him: "I am glad to see you at Drury Lane, but you are come to act in a wilderness of a place, and God knows, if I had not made my reputation in a small theatre, I never should have done it"\*

On his taking office as stage-manager, Mr Kemble instituted reform in what might be a trivial matter, but which was, in truth, one of signal importance. The reader may smile to learn that this was in the arrangement of the names in the bills. Up to this time these had been set out in hierarchical order, according to the rank and position of the performer, which, as may be imagined, gave rise to endless heartburnings and difficulties for the prompters. Compromises in the shape of half-a-dozen patterns of type, and these more or less "displayed," as it is called, with other devices, had to be contrived to soothe the susceptibilities of the performers.

It was honourable to be placed at the top, and more honourable to be placed at bottom with an "And" before the name of the character, other situations in the bill took rank in the eye of the performer according to the order in which they followed the first name. Kemble entirely destroyed all distinction of rank in the bill by placing the characters just as they may happen to be printed in the books of the play, or according to the rank of supposed character, placing always

\* "Lives of the Kembles," vol. 1 p. 310.

the highest character, as a king, governor, etc at the top, and servants, etc at the bottom

As publicity and reputation make the actor's fortune, he cannot be blamed for attaching importance to what affects these things a good deal Nor was Kemble unprepared to enforce discipline by sterner methods Actors, though jealous and fierce in quarrel, have but seldom "gone out" with each other It will be a surprise to learn that the leading instance is that of the grave and almost pedantic Kemble, who, having affronted one of the Mr Aikens—"brethren in mediocrity," as Elia styles them—expressed his willingness to give that gentleman satisfaction "On reaching the ground, Mr Kemble required Mr. Aiken to fire first, as he was angered, and when it was proposed they should fire together, he declined, saying 'He had come out for Mr. Aiken's satisfaction' Aiken became unnerved at conduct so honourable, and raising his pistol three times to take aim, trembled, and dropped it Kemble at length lost his patience, and exclaimed 'For God's sake! Mr. Aiken, do you intend to fire to-day?' Aiken then fired, and missed him Kemble discharged his pistol in the air, and asked him if he was satisfied? 'Perfectly.' 'Then I hope there is an end and forgiveness to the matter,' said he, extending his hand." The only other *rencontre* that is, I think, recorded, is the one between Mr. George Garrick and Baddeley, for which the beautiful Mrs Baddeley was accountable

In the year 1794 died that excellent dramatist and clever manager, Colman the elder In 1785 he was at Bath, when he was seized with paralysis, and his son and the faithful Jewell, treasurer of the Haymarket—the same who attended Foote at Dover in his last moments—hurried to his side His mind now began to fail, and though it has been often repeated that he sank into idiotcy, his son curiously refutes this notion, saying that his malady took the shape of an extraordinary

activity—his brain teeming with dramatic images, plots, and characters of plays in grotesque After two or three years the malady became fixed. His son, a gay, somewhat extravagant youth, little more than twenty years old, had to undertake the management of a London theatre, which he carried on with energy and success. His father was a man of good birth and high connections, being son of the English minister at Florence and also cousin to Lord Pulteney, of whose enormous fortune he had for many years reasonable expectations. In this he was disappointed, but received a moderate annuity \*

While Drury Lane was rebuilding, Mr Harris was also seized with a desire for enlarging his theatre 25,000*l* were laid out in this extensive remodelling, also undertaken with a view to gain room "An entirely new face," with a portico, was added He made a small increase in the prices, but two of his reforms were ominous of discontent He abolished the shilling gallery and fixed the pit ticket at three-and-sixpence. Riots were the consequence, continued for several nights, until a promise was given to restore the shilling gallery, which was done There were other and more famous riots to follow †

The sensation of the year 1796 was the singular Ireland forgery—the production of "Vortigern"—the forged Shakespearean play On the delivery of the lines the imposture

\* The slender personal memoirs left by George Colman the younger are the most interesting and vivacious of their kind—full of what approaches wit, and written in a vein of uncontrollable spirits They, however, go no farther than the death of his father

† Disorders of this sort are almost a necessary incident to patents When Mr Bancroft recently abolished the pit at the Haymarket, it was urged, and justly, that it was his own property, with which he could deal as he thought fit, and with which no one was entitled to interfere, save by not extending their support But the patent theatre being a monopoly, excluding the public from resorting to another place, it incurs thus certain obligations to the public, which the latter reminds it of in this rough, rude way.

was at once detected. It is said that Sheridan was of this opinion all through, while Kemble was willing to produce it. In 1797, the retirement of Miss Farren and her brilliant marriage was the talk of the town. In 1798 occurred a very tragic business, which has become one of the legends of the stage. It has been often repeated, that, during a prosperous run of "The Stranger," an actor, John Palmer, after repeating "There is another and a better world," had suddenly fallen and expired. This has been found in many books, but the truth appears to be the following, said to have been furnished by Whitfield, who performed Baron Steinfort, and was with him on the stage when the event took place.

A few minutes before he was called to go on for the scene in which he died, I asked him how he was. He answered, "Very poorly." He was more collected and correct through the whole, in regard to the words and the business, but more energetic and loud in the description of his false friend than when he performed the part before. His voice seemed to crack, and at the end of the speech he struck his head with great force, then crossed me from my right hand to my left. The two short speeches he uttered after were given rather faintly, but not more so than appeared perfectly consonant to the situation of the character. After I put the question, "*Why did you not keep your children with you? they would have amused you in many a dreary hour,*" he turned and tottered, dying in a few moments.\*

\* This ghastly subject of deaths on the stage or of mortal illness has often exercised the labours of the dramatic historian. The list, as might be expected, is a full one. It includes Smith, in 1696, seized with apoplexy. Betterton, in 1710, who had driven in his gout to appear for his benefit, and died in three days. Bond, in 1735, died while blessing his children (theatrically). Cashel and Spiller were seized with apoplexy. In 1757, Peg Woffington was struck by paralysis. In 1759, Patterson, when performing the Duke in "Measure for Measure," and saying, "Reason thus with life," dropped into Moody's arms and expired. In 1776, an actress, Mrs. Jefferson, looking on at a rehearsal, fell into the same actor's arms and expired. In 1769, Holland received such a shock from finding he had spoken to one who had come from a small-pox patient and, it is added, from seeing a large rat run across the stage, that he died in a fortnight. Foote was seized with paralysis in 1777, while on the stage. In 1784, West



Some years earlier, and almost on the stage, occurred the death of a good old actor of Garrick's *coirps*. This was Baddeley. A provision of his curious will, a childish attempt to preserve his memory, reminds us of him every Christmas, and his "Twelfth Cake" is regularly cut in Drury Lane green-room. The purport of the document is as follows. It was dated November, 1794.

His house at Moulsey and his house at New Store Street, with his plate, furniture, etc he gave to his faithful friend and companion, Mrs Catherine Strickland, generally called and known by the name of Mrs Baddeley, for her life. The house and premises at Moulsey to be used as an asylum for decayed actors and actresses, and when the net produce amounted to 350*l* per annum, pensions were to be given. Especial care was to be taken to have the words "Baddeley's Asylum" in the front of the house. Garrick's head and his theatrical portraits, etc were to be placed in the asylum. The pensioners to give small sums to the poor, "*in order to constitute themselves respectable in the eyes of their neighbours.*" The pensioners also to spend 20*s* on the 20th of April in every year, in honour of the birth of the founder. *A regalia to be worn.* One hundred pounds Three per

Digges was also thus seized, in Dublin, while rehearsing with Mrs Siddons. In 1794, Baddeley, when dressed for Moses, was taken ill and shortly after died. In 1799, Chickingham burst a blood-vessel while performing Osman in "The Castle Spectre." In 1817, Canning, in playing "Jane Shore," at the words, "May such befall me at my latest hour," fell down and expired. In 1826, Fulham, in Dublin, after an encore of his song, was going to the green room, when he fell dead. In 1833, Kean fell into his son's arms when playing Othello, saying, "I am dying." In 1850, Mrs Glover took her last benefit, but was almost unconscious, and died three days later. In 1858, Harley, while playing Bottom, was seized by paralysis and died in a few hours, his last strange words being from his part, "I have an exposition of sleep come upon me." In 1861, James Bland died at the stage door of the Strand Theatre. In 1863, the facetious James Rogers, after struggling through his part in a burlesque at the St James's Theatre, died in an armchair, holding his wife's hand, and quoting a line of M<sup>r</sup> E L Blanchard, "The little raffle is over." In 1865, Miss Cotterell was seized with a fit at rehearsal and expired. In 1872, Henry Barnett, after playing in a farce, expired in a cab. Such are the touching incidents connected with this tragic subject. It will be seen that only three or four have actually died on the stage. I take these from M<sup>r</sup> Sanders's MS *penes me*. Dr Doran and Mr. Dutton Cook have also treated the same subject.

Cent Consolidated Bank Annuities, which produce 3 per cent., is left to purchase a twelfth cake, with wine and punch, which the ladies and gentlemen of Drury Lane are requested to partake of every Twelfth Night in the great green-room. His executors to publish every year his letter, which appeared in "The General Advertiser," April 20th, 1790, respecting the disagreement with his unhappy wife, to prevent the world from looking on his conduct in the villainous point of view as set forth in certain books and pamphlets.

This fantastic bequest has inspired no respect for his memory, and the players who partake of his cake and wine look on the matter as an incident from an *opera bouffe* \*

\* At the latest celebration, the manager overwhelmed the modest fare of the actor in champagne and a splendid supper, and thus received all the honours of the night.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE DRAMATISTS.

WE must now turn to survey the interesting subject of the authorship that existed in those days, and which the monopoly of the two houses had the merit of developing. One of the most singular puzzles of stage management is to find persons of the calibre of John Kemble and his gifted sister cheerfully sanctioning the degradation of the theatre to base uses—opening the house to dogs and horses, and ranting melodramas! These things were certainly not known till he became stage-director at Drury Lane in the year 1788. At the beginning of the century it is well known how the taste of the town turned in the direction of the gloomy horrors of the German stage, a morbid influence which for many years infected even comedies. This was, in truth, but that taste of novelty which invariably affects the audiences grown tired of the old dishes, however good. At all times, however, there has been a decided taste for the sad and gloomy, and it is not improbable that in our day we shall see a revival of the drama of pathos and horror. This taste seized on the public mind, and was effectively ridiculed in Canning's burlesque of "The Rovers."

Another feature of the time was the rage for new pieces,

which seemed to be brought out without intermission. This is shown very distinctly by the career of Thomas Dibdin, son of the more famous Charles, and whose pen was in great demand at the theatres. We find that this facile and once popular writer contributed a vast number of pieces to the stage within a period of about twenty years—a really successful drama running for twenty or thirty nights, besides being revived as occasion served.

Nothing shows Sheridan's genius more than the mode in which he could adapt himself to different tastes, and when he put on the stage "fustian" pieces, he brought all his skill and tact to make them thoroughly successful. Three remarkable plays of this kind brought him good fortune—"The Castle Spectre," "The Stranger," and "Pizarro," all of which Kemble condescended to set off by his talents. The first, produced in 1797, ran some sixty nights, and has kept the stage until recently, it was the work of the young Matthew, or "Monk" Lewis, and came at the most opportune moment to fill the exhausted treasury. There is an air of mystery over the whole which was then new. What, for instance, could be more stirring than the scene of an escape, in which the actor has to climb a wall and jump through a window while his black guard plays at dice?

Kemble had to climb from a sofa to a gothic window, and, being alarmed by his black guards, he has to fall from the height flat again at his length upon the said sofa, and seem asleep, as they had before seen him. This he did as boldly and suddenly as if he had been shot.

A more famous play, and one of a certain power, is "The Stranger," translated and adapted by Thompson, and put into Sheridan's hands by Mr. Grubb, "whom the great angler had now hooked into his concern, a good-natured person, sufficiently humble not to be too busy, and he was allowed

occasionally to advance an opinion, but more frequently his money."\*

Kemble had always a hankering after shows, processions, etc, which he at first was anxious to display in the Shakespearean plays, but was presently attracted by the German drama. But there can be little doubt that he was led by the serious necessity of making "the thing pay"

"The Iron Chest" may be considered the foremost of these gloomy efforts, succeeded very shortly by others. "The Iron Chest" contained the very essence of all the German horrors, being founded, as is well known, on Godwin's "Caleb Williams." Arbitrary literalness was never carried farther than in this piece, where a murder done years before is presumed to be registered, as it were, by "a bloody knife and cloth" hidden in a trunk!—a trunk kept in the library! This damning piece of evidence is supposed to convict the murderer. Yet the whole makes a powerful play. Mr Kemble was suffering from depression, or a severe cold, and merely walked through the part with sepulchral gravity. The play was condemned, and the author published it with a well-known bitter preface, in which he assailed the actor with all his power of sarcasm. This amusing piece was suppressed, and the author appealing later to the public with a new actor—Elliston—not only reversed the verdict but established the piece as a "stock-play"—an author's real triumph.†

"Pizarro," however, was more of what is called a "money" success—a dashing spectacular piece, full of claptrap declamation and shows. A literal translation had been made from

\* Thompson translated and fitted many German plays, but one M Schink claimed to have sent a version of the German piece a year and a half before his rival.

† It has been lately revived by Mr Irving in a very complete way, he himself personating the leading part, relieving its weight with those romantic touches he knows so well how to impart. The result was effective and interesting.

the German and put before the manager, who frequently worked some of his own speeches into Rolla's "address to the soldiers," which were actually recognised by Mr Pitt. During one season it was said to have brought 15,000*l* into the treasury, while, more wonderful still, 30,000 copies were sold for reading!

After this came a further descent. Two pieces at the two great theatres ushered in the degradation of converting the stages into menageries! In 1811, "Bluebeard" was given at Drury Lane, with "real horses," which was followed by "Timour the Tartar," often since produced at the circus—its fitting *locale*.

No wonder that Elliston said later

Posture-masters must be found (for the minor theatres), who should writhen themselves into more contortions than Mr. Pack was employed to do on the stage of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, dogs must be found who should bark more eloquently than the "Dog of Montargis" was engaged to do on the stage of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, children must be found to support the dignity of the minor stage as effectually as "the dignity" of the "great national concern" of Drury Lane was supported, lately, by the little girl who personated "Richard the Third;" horses must be found to prance, if possible, more classically than those that sustained the "regular" and "national drama" of "Timour the Tartar" Poor Mr Astley (the original proprietor of the Olympic) used to exclaim pathetically, "Why do they take my horses? I never tried to engage Mrs. Siddons"

But if we turn to comedy, a strength and freshness was shown, with a variety and invention in character and dialogue, which contrasts strongly with the weakness of our days. There was exaggeration—farcical almost—but the result was most entertaining, and the humour and even wit displayed make the plays themselves entertaining and readable. It is difficult

to account for these capricious turns and changes in the prosperity of the drama. At the present moment, in 1882, the stage is flourishing, but English comedy and tragedy hardly exist. The British playwright now swims on corks as it were, "living and thriving" on wholesale adaptations from the French. Yet within living memory there was a period when there was a series of admirable comedies, full of vivacity, sterling and enduring, provided by writers like Morton, Reynolds, Holcroft, Inchbald, and others of inferior mark, who yet wrote in the same school. It is not, however, difficult to account for this. Though good plays engender good actors much more than do actors engender good plays, still the fact of there being great theatres with great companies, such as exist now in France, must be a stimulant to authors. The "good old comedies" are remarkable for the abundance of character, exaggerated and extravagant, while even in the more sober and measured classical pieces, such as "The School for Scandal," there is an over-emphasis in every utterance, which is charged with a significance that would not be found in real life, because there it would be distributed over a longer period of time. The fault of modern playwrights is this *colourlessness* of much of the dialogue and incident. The stage itself is an exaggeration, and must be an *abridgment* or abstract of life. Hazlitt, in answer to the question, "Why are there so few modern comedies?" explains that it is because the ground has been gone over and the topics exhausted. "There is now," he says, "a uniformity of manners and a sameness of character, owing to the advance of civilisation and locomotion, which leaves little to be treated. All the professions are kept apart, and move in their own narrow and eccentric grooves." But this seems fallacious, and assumes that the interest of comedy turned on mere *accidents*. On the contrary, the essentials of characters are

eternal, and will be found the same in every generation—misers, spendthrifts, coquettes, coxcombs will ever flourish. The *bourgeois gentilhomme*, and his diverting attempts to get into society, may be seen in the city every day. More true, however, is his remark that the old-fashioned dress and stilted courtesies of compliment have deprived us of a dramatic element.

Nothing excites our dramatic envy so much as the tide of good authorship which prevailed at both houses during this period, and enriched the stage with so many works that, if not excellent, had the all-redeeming virtues of spirit and character. With so many authors and so many pieces it is curious to see what variety was secured, and what quaint and eccentric beings were devised, and yet not too far fetched to suit the performers of each house. Colman, Cumberland, O’Keefe, Reynolds, Thomas, Morton, Holcroft, Tobin, made a wonderful circle, of whom Morton certainly has left the deepest impression on us. About these comedies, with all their exaggerations, there is a pleasant humour, and in the days when they were performed by the persons for whom they were written they must have been entertaining to a degree. “Speed the Plough” and “Cure for the Headache” are written in the true spirit of comedy, and the humours are most diverting. Colman’s “Poor Gentleman” is quite as good, Dr Ollapod and Sir Robert Bramble being as satisfactory as anything in comedy. Of the broad farce writers, Kenney’s “Raising the Wind” is amusing. But, in truth, there are in the list of farces some of the most genuine fun and frolic, beside which a “Palais Royal” farce seems of thin flavour, and some of the boisterous rollicking pieces by little known authors are conceived in a spirit of riotous mirth. The situations and embarrassments are of the most genuine kind, with an air of probability too.

Much of this speciousness was owing to the state of society, when the absence of railways and telegraphs, and the time



taken for communication, threw people much more on their own resources than now, and rendered extrication difficult. Thus a stranger at an inn, in a ludicrous difficulty, would have to wait a week perhaps before he could be identified or aided. So with characters, the same absence of communication favoured the development of eccentricities, people remaining in the same district all their lives. There was, however, in these "palmy" days a vast deal of adaptation and translation, the work, as now, of professional adapters. We are also surprised at the number of new and varied characters presented in such pieces as "The Road to Ruin," "Cure for the Heartache," "Agreeable Surprise," and many more of the same type—each play almost abounds with characters. Here again was the advantage of a great, duly organised house, for characters had to be found for a large number of capable performers, who acted and re-acted and "played up" to each other. "Reynolds," says Mr. Boaden, contrasting two of these clever men, and adding some interesting details as to the payment of authors, "no sooner had ascertained the profits of one play than he turned to the composition of another, which was 'no less material to him' than the former. And, in fact, in the space of twenty-four years he produced six-and-twenty pieces, of which only four were indifferently received. Morten had more of the artist about him than his gay friend, and with better plots laid his interest deeper in the passions, he never would admit himself to be excited by anything but the hope of gain. It was no uncommon thing for him to receive 1000*l* for a comedy."

One of the most popular plays on the stage, and which interests every audience, is "The Honeymoon," though at every turn it suggests "The Taming of the Shrew." The author, Tobin, is known but by this one piece, and a rather melancholy interest attaches to its history. He was a solicitor who deserted his profession to write pieces, which he was offer-

ing to every theatre, one, indeed, "The Faro Table," was accepted at Drury Lane and forgotten "The Honeymoon" was later offered, and similarly overlooked. "Many and many a time," says Mr. Kelly, "have I accompanied him to Mr Richardson's house to get back his comedy, but he never succeeded, excuse upon excuse was made, and no wonder, for, in fact, they were ignorant that it was in their possession, and after repeated calls, waiting jobs, and denials, the unfortunate author gave up the piece as lost." He was presently attacked with consumption, and was about embarking at Cork when he died. This was in November, 1804. Little over a month later, Wroughton, who was then stage-manager of Drury Lane, having nothing in the shape of a new comedy to produce, rummaged the prompter's-room, where many plays lay neglected, it may be, never looked at. Luckily, one of the first that came to hand was "The Honeymoon," which Wroughton took home to read, and on his own judgment, and at his own risk, had it copied, cast, and put into rehearsal. Thus did chance bring to light one of the most popular comedies that had been produced for many years.

An almost parallel case is that of Gerald Griffin's "Gisippus," offered wearily to many a manager during his life, and performed brilliantly by Macready after his death.

Nor should we pass by a form of piece much in vogue—the melodrama, in which brigands, and songs, and German castles figured. Such were "The Miller and his Men," "The Castle of Andalusia," "Tekeli, or, The Siege of Mongatz," "Tale of Mystery." These, in their way, have merit, notably "The Castle of Andalusia," which had extraordinary success, the topics and incidents being novel, though since grown familiar and hackneyed. Admirable actors undertook the characters, there was an air of earnestness and reality imparted. One of the purveyors, but living a good many years later, of melo-

drama of this peculiar pattern, was the hapless George Soane, son of the well-known architect, and founder of the museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields. He was the author of two-act pieces like "The Falls of Clyde," and was one of those who hung loose on the drama. A more piteous story than his could not be conceived, it was a life spent in hapless penury and struggle and careless extravagance, at open war with his wealthy father, whom he denounced to the public in pamphlets, and who pitilessly cut him off. No story, save perhaps that of Savage, can be compared with his

## CHAPTER IV.

### DECAY AND DISORDER

WITH the beginning of the century affairs at Drury Lane Theatre began to take a very disastrous turn. The extravagance of the improvident manager and his family, and his neglect of the administration, began to tell on its fortunes in the most serious way. The treasury was drained to supply family expenses, and he was too lazy to think of supplying new pieces, wasting that mine of wealth which lay at his hand. It is matter of doubt, however, whether he would have been as successful in a second comedy of manners and society, and he would probably have gone over the same ground. Kemble, it will be remembered, was the stage-manager, and a few of his letters will give the best idea of the state things were in.

For a long time the embarrassments of the theatre were gathering fast and thick. Pieces in preparation stood still for actual cash necessary to supply the common articles or "properties" of the scene; the salaries of the two leading players—the mainstay of the house—were in arrear. It is unusual to find a stage-manager writing in this strain.

MY DEAR PEAKE,

Let me remind you, that you are to send me 50*l* for Mrs. Siddons to-day, or we shall have no "King John" on Saturday. If you possibly can, send me a draft for the 50*l*.

(which you promised to have given me last Monday se'nnight)  
 for the author of "Deaf and Dumb" *They are standing still*  
*in Greenwood's room for want of a little canvas* Unless you  
 help us there, we can have no "Cymbeline," nor any pantomime  
 at Christmas Yours, J. P. KEMBLE

And again.

MY DEAR PEAKE,

We are all at a stand for want of colours  
 Monday Morning Yours, J P K.

And—

One more, and that's the last.—*Othello*

Tuesday, Half-past Five.

MY DEAR PEAKE,

It is now two days since my necessity made me send to  
 you for 60*l* My request has been treated with a disregard  
 that I am at a loss how to account for. I certainly shall go  
 and act my part to-night, but, unless you send me 100*l* before  
 Thursday, I will not act on Thursday, and if you make me  
 come a-begging again, it will be for 200*l*. before I set my foot  
 in the theatre Yours, J P. K.

Mr Boaden says that Sheridan often had to use all his  
 persuasion to bring Mrs Siddons down to the theatre to  
 perform, offering the security of all he had left—his honour.

He was also very eager to get Mr. Kemble to join him  
 in the proprietorship, and set many tempting arguments before  
 him But he could not at the time persuade him, though he  
 set before him this bait

	£
Salary as actor . . . . .	1050
Benefit . . . . .	315
Manager . . . . .	525
Percentage on clear profit . . . . .	300
Dividend on quarter share . . . . .	2500
	<hr/>
	4690
	<hr/>

"I put this," adds the sanguine Sheridan, referring to the dividend, "*in the very lowest speculation*"

Kemble seems not to have wholly resigned the idea, but his friend Morris, a lawyer of eminence, on looking into the deeds, could not make out even a secure title, and he determined to purchase a share in the rival house, and retired in June, 1802

The weekly pay-list during the last year of his management amounted to 413*l* in salaries. He himself had 56*l*. Bannister, King, Pope, C. Kemble, Barrymore, etc, from 17*l* to 10*l*, Grimaldi, 4*l*, Mrs Jordan about 31*l* (during the season she received 1081*l*), Mrs Crouch, 14*l*; Mrs Powell, 10*l*, the other ladies, from 5*l* to 3*l*. There were twenty-five leading male actors, twenty-five inferior, and twenty female performers

We now come to the fine display of courage on the part of King George the Third when fired at in May, 1800, from the pit, by the insane Hatfield. It is well worth recording.

The King, upon hearing the report of the pistol, stood firm, at about four paces in advance from the door of the box; but amid the alarm and horror, and the thousand voices that called to seize the assassin, with the self-possession that became a sovereign, perhaps expecting to have a second shot fired in the tumult from some other quarter, His Majesty calmly advanced to the very front of the box, where he remained, as such a man only could be, perfectly undismayed. Upon seeing the Queen enter, he at first with his hand waved her back, but upon her inquiring what was the matter, the King considerably replied "Only a squib! they have been firing squibs." After the assassin, across the orchestra, had been taken out of the pit, the Queen, in great agitation, came forward and curtsied, and asked His Majesty "whether they should stay?" His answer was, "We will not stir. We will stay the whole of the entertainment"\*

\* The ever-ready Sheridan, when "God save the King" was called for, instantly scribbled an *à propos* verse, which he put into the singer's hand

Among the many pleasing things associated with this excellent and truly unfortunate King none are so agreeable as his thorough and rational enjoyment of the stage. At Drury Lane, at Windsor, even at Weymouth, he extended his earnest patronage, and had his favourite pieces and actors, of which Quick was the "King's favourite actor," *en titre*. This player he was sure to recognise in the street or on the promenade by kindly nod or speech. When new talent was heard of, the performer was sent for. Lord Harcourt wrote to Elliston that he had mentioned him to their Majesties. "But Mr Thornton's company at Windsor was only fit to exhibit in a barn." "Don Felix, Charles Surface, Young Wilding, and Vapour are characters," he adds, "which would please their Majesties, and represent you to advantage. Walter, one of your best performances, I do not mention, because I am sure the King will never again see 'The Children in the Wood'." At Weymouth, Elliston made a good impression while playing before His Majesty, who asked the actor. "Well, well, Elliston," said he, "where—where have you been acting lately?" "At Wells and Shepton Mallet, your Majesty, in which places I was manager." "Manager—manager! that won't do—that won't do, eh, Charlotte? Managers go to the wall—get the worst of it." "It didn't do, your Majesty. At Wells I was particularly unfortunate." "At Wells—Wells!" replied the King, good-humouredly, "'mongst the bishops! Quite right—quite right! no business with the bishops, eh, Charlotte? Bishops don't go to plays—no business at plays—you no business with them. Well, well, where next?" "I returned to Weymouth, where I have redeemed everything in the honour of serving your Majesty." "Eh, eh?" responded the King in the same affability of tone and manner—"what, kings better than bishops, eh?—found it out—found it out, Elliston?"

It was at Weymouth (Mr Raymond tells us) that a little adventure befell this comedian. On the morning of his benefit His Majesty had been rambling about the suburbs of the town, when the rain coming on just as he was passing the theatre-door he went in, and finding no one immediately at hand proceeded at once to the royal box and seated himself in his own chair. His Majesty fell into a comfortable doze, and Elliston, now making his way to the theatre, went straight into the King's box, and on perceiving a man fast asleep in His Majesty's chair was about recalling him to his senses in no gentle a manner when, very fortunately, he recognised the King himself. What was to be done? Elliston hit on the following expedient. taking up a violin from the orchestra he stepped into the pit, and placing himself just beneath his truly exalted guest struck up, *dolcemente*, "God save the King!" The expedient had the desired effect, the royal sleeper was gently loosened from the spell which had bound him, and, awaking, up he sprang, and staring the genuflecting comedian full in the face, exclaimed, "Hey! hey! hey! what, what! Oh yes! I see, Elliston—ha! ha! rain come on—took a seat—took a nap. What's o'clock?" "Approaching six, your Majesty" "Six!—six o'clock!" interrupted the King "Send to Her Majesty—say I'm here. Stay—stay—this wig won't do—eh, eh? Don't keep the people waiting—light up—light up—let 'em in—let 'em in—ha! ha! fast asleep. Play well to-night, Elliston Great favourite with the Queen. Let 'em in—let 'em in" The house was presently illuminated; messengers were sent off to the royal party, which, in a short lapse of time, reached the theatre Elliston then quitted the side of his most affable monarch, and, dressing himself in five minutes for his part in the drama, went through his business with bounding spirit; nor was his glee at all diminished when, on attending the royal visitors to their carriage, the King once more nodded his head, saying. "Fast asleep, eh, Elliston!—fast asleep?"

His good-humoured enjoyment of even what was supposed to be, though erroneous, a satire against himself was



shown on the occasion of a visit to Covent Garden towards the close of the century, to see a new comedy, "Speculation," by the vivacious Reynolds

The two principal characters (says the author), Tanjore and Alderman Arable, were admirably performed by Lewis and Quick. The latter was a gentleman farmer, and because his barn, granary, piggery, and pigeon-house were fancifully painted, highly varnished, and in every respect fantastically decorated, the democratic frequenters of the theatre pronounced the original of this scene to be Frogmore, and Alderman Arable a satire on no less a personage than the King. On the night His Majesty commanded "Speculation" the alarm of the manager and the author was again intense. On the appearance of the supposed Frogmore every eye in the theatre was directed towards His Majesty, and that his eyes were directed towards the scene with particular attention was rendered awfully conspicuous by the marked manner in which he leant over the box, making repeated use of his opera-glass, and frequently turning towards his family as if to make remarks "I see," said Mr Harris, in considerable agitation, "I see that the King is offended." As for me, at these words, the terror I suffered was so considerably increased that I began to be convinced what I had apprehended. In this state of mind did we continue while the business of the stage proceeded to that part of the scene where Quick, as Alderman Arable, says "That pretty team now carries all the ashes and other manure to a neighbouring farmer, for you must know that I am much too cleanly to have my dust and dirt thrown on my own land" His Majesty threw himself back in the box with a most violent burst of laughter, exclaiming, "I—I—I?—Frogmore!—good!—and like it—like it!" Once again our triumph was complete; from this moment His Majesty continued to point out the application to the Queen and Princesses, and they partaking in his delight to the end of the play, Quick, in the supposed royal Frogmore farmer, became their principal amusement.

A new and perplexing source of trouble—still connected

with the question of resistance to the monopoly—was now opening on the managers.

In the season of 1800-1, the performers received notice from the treasurer, "that in future the charge of the benefit would be 160*l*, exclusive of the usual charge of supernumeraries." On the opening of the season they also found that the use of their orders had been restrained in a very unusual manner; and that a number of new restrictions, of a trivial nature, had been introduced. A committee of eight persons was therefore appointed to wait on Mr Harris, and communicate to him the sentiments of the majority of the performers. Their letter seemed chiefly to object to the additional charge of 20*l*. on benefit-nights, and to the fine of 30*l* on the refusal of a character. The memoranda were signed by Messrs Munden, J Johnstone, Incedon, Pope, Fawcett, Holman, H Johnston, and Knight. Mr Harris rightly contended that orders were a gratuitous indulgence, the others insisted that he had formerly admitted them to be the privilege of the actors, he promised, however, to make the indulgence as accommodating as possible. The charge on benefit-nights, the proprietors argued, had ever been regulated by the actual expenditure of each night of performance, and the present charge was much under the nightly expense, the enlargement of the theatre, and the advancement of the price, were said to be much more than an equivalent to the performers for the unavoidable increased charge. The fine for refusing a character had been established two seasons ago without a murmur, and had proved of such efficacy that not a single fine had been imposed since the new regulation. The treasurer stated also, that on an accurate calculation, he found that the nightly expenses very considerably exceeded the sum of 160*l*. In a subsequent letter, addressed to the eight performers by Mr Hughes, he reduces the question to this simple ground "Whether the theatre shall be governed and controlled by eight performers, each of them receiving, in one season, on an average, 760*l* per annum, exclusive of his summer and other private emoluments, sick or well, act or not act, without risk of any sort?" or "Whether the management, with all its detailed regulations, shall remain with the proprietors, whose profits depend altogether on conduct, good

fortune, and the favour of the public?" Mr Cumberland undertook to become a mediator, but nothing was effected, and the performers at length resolved on laying their case before the public in a pamphlet, written by Mr Holman, in which they very fully entered into the subject. For several weeks this theatrical dispute was the topic of general discussion, in which both parties had their friends and advocates. At length it was agreed by the persons concerned to leave the subject to the decision of the Lord Chamberlain, without any further appeal. His lordship entered into the merits of the question, and gave his verdict in favour of the manager.

Messrs Pope and Holman left the theatre at the expiration of their respective articles, the other six performers were immediately reconciled to Mr Harris, and the business of the theatre went on without any further interruption.

The actors, however, urged fairly enough that this large income was more apparent than real. They were not paid by the week, but only for the nights they acted. These payments, too, only were for the season. They were paid, therefore, only at that rate.

When Kemble returned from abroad he was ready to conclude his purchase of a share in Covent Garden Theatre. The interesting Mrs. Inchbald, whose *naïveté* and cleverness make her story a most piquant one, had acted for him. The result was he came into the partnership, buying a sixth share of the whole for 22,000*l.*—or, at the rate of 132,000*l.* for the whole. Now was he to exchange his life of certain emolument and easy labour for trouble, anxiety, and loss of fortune. But he was only following the invariable course, the great actor being always led on to become manager.

Victor, however, says he is convinced of this truth by experience that no man, let his theatrical knowledge be ever so great, can be a gainer by being manager, unless he is at the same time first in the profession of an actor. The reader can readily supply instances *pro* and *con*. With his partner

he got on harmoniously, but Kemble was ever easy tempered, though affecting a stiff solemnity on occasions Mr Harris and his son were persons of mark in the line of English managers. Successive directors of Covent Garden, the father and son belonged to a well-known family, who for some fifty years administered the fortunes of that great house There are valuable traditions in management to be transmitted by family ties, and experience may thus almost be said to be inherited. Rich, Garrick, Colman, and Harris seemed to exhaust the list of well-trained managers Mr Harris, senior, was a courteous, liberal gentleman, and considerate to all under his direction. He was originally a soap-boiler, and had purchased his shares in the theatre for a small sum, and by judicious engagements of good actors had gradually developed his property. Out of the profits of his theatre he was able to live in handsome style at his place near Uxbridge, Belmont, where he entertained his friends Of his consideration for his actors, O'Keefe relates several instances creditable to his heart

Much of Kemble's trouble was caused by George Frederick Cooke, one of the strange eccentrics of the stage, a violent, jealous, clever being, of much power and originality, but addicted to, and ultimately shipwrecked by, the fatal vice of drink. Natures of his kind in other professions are forced into a sort of discipline, but on the stage real talent seems to condone such excesses, and the influence of applause, flatterers, and a party prevents the application of wholesome restraint. The story of his career is a pitiable one. the arriving at the theatre intoxicated, and being thrust on the stage, after wet towels had been applied, and the staggering through his part, at last coming to disregard his audience, when such a scene as this took place : " Having vainly tried," says Mrs. Mathews, " to recollect the beginning of Richard's

first soliloquy, he tottered forward with a cunning yet maudlin intent to divert the indignation expressed into a false channel; and laying his hand impressively on his chest to insinuate that illness was the only cause of his failure, with upturned eyes supplicating all the sympathy of his audience, he hiccuped out the unlucky words '*My old complaint*' when a burst of derisive laughter followed, and renewed hisses "

He sank lower and lower, until he was found unprofitable. Yet, after his first appearance at Covent Garden in 1800, he brought a vast deal of money into the treasury, and on the whole his follies, during his short twelve years' course—he died in 1812—were very indulgently treated \*

The first matter of importance under Mr Kemble's supervision was the well-known "Master Betty" craze, in 1804, and so often recounted That this boy, who was undoubtedly clever, interesting, and sympathetic, as can be seen from the various pictures, certainly deserved much of his reputation, is evident from the approbation of men like Fox, and others of equal judgment Miss Siddons and her brother looked on scornfully, the former declaring he was merely a pretty boy. The evil was the example set, and other "infant phenomenons"—Miss Mudie, Master Burke, and even Master Balfe—succeeded in course of time.

Both theatres contended for the child, and the dispute was at last referred to Parson Bate Dudley, who declared that both had an equal claim, and that he should appear at both, which he did, beginning with Covent Garden.

\* His spirit before the audience, when he was sober, was untamed, and had in it something gallant, as when he told the people at Liverpool "there was not a brick in their duty hole that was not cemented by the blood of a negro" On another occasion, he said the only thing he had to apologise for was 'having degraded himself by appearing before them,' but this he was induced to qualify later, saying, "That he meant he had degraded himself by appearing in such a state," etc.

Mr Raymond tells the wonderful result

The average of the first twenty-four performances was 609*l.* per night. After completing this, a fresh one was made in Drury Lane, at 100 guineas a night. The sum total of receipts amounted to 32,416*l.*, and the average 586*l.* per night !

In 1809, we find the brilliant manager of the Haymarket Theatre, George Colman, suffering the restraint of the King's Bench Prison, and essaying to direct his theatre from that retreat. This was not unnaturally objected to by his brother-partners, Messrs Morris and Winston, and the Chancellor before whom the matter was brought suggested that the dispute should be referred to arbitrators. When these were appointed, one being Mr Harris, fresh objections were taken.

The Chancellor said he thought Mr. Harris "a very unfit person for an arbitrator" in such a case, and postponed his judgment "I will not now," he added, "attempt to insinuate what the decision will be, but I feel confident it will be disagreeable to all the parties "

This hint had its effect, and the matter was withdrawn for the present. But they broke out on the score of certain engagements of Elliston and Munden, at what were thought too high salaries. Munden, whose weakness was a fondness for money, had lately broken into revolt, setting at naught the old-established rules of the theatre. He not only refused a part "in the rudest language of defiance," but he claimed salary when he had not been acting (the old rule being "that no performer should receive salary until he had acted or given notice of being ready to do so when called upon"). His salary at this time was 17*l.* a week—not a very large sum for the "first comic" of a great house. The performer continuing to make remonstrance, and declaring that what he received "was insufficient for the liberal support of himself and his family," desired to leave, and the proprietors agreed to cancel

his articles. This transaction was very significant, when we consider that he had already headed a revolt at the other theatre, and it showed that the old respectable system was tottering.

He was presently drawn into the quarrel that was then going on between his new managers, and in which Colman took his side. Munden was to have 100*l.* for a month's service, which was thought too much by Winston and Morris, and his part of the quarrel again found its way to Lord Eldon.

If (said he, in an extraordinary harangue) the litigation on the east and west side of the Haymarket continued, in justice to the other suitors a branch of the Court of Chancery ought to be placed in the Haymarket. It was not to be borne that he should be made the manager of opera-houses, theatres, circuses, and puppet-shows. He had not a knowledge of the merit of the different performers; but, if such salaries were given to them, it was a better profession than the Bar. He had once said that he would not give 5*s.* to hear Catalani sing all the year round, and suppose he was to decide, he might think that a singer ought to have 5*s.* instead of 6000*l.* a year; he would, however, never make use of that expression again, for, from the first time he did, he never dare venture into a place of fashionable amusement. (This was in the truly contemptuous strain.) Mr. Morris ought to be consulted on the engagements, and where he was not, he ought to give notice to the performers that they were not legally engaged, in which case an action would not lay against him, but if consulted, and Mr. Colman and the other proprietor agreed, he must acquiesce, and pay the salary of the person so engaged.

Period the Sixth.

FROM THE OPENING OF GREAT THEATRES TO THE  
“LIBERTY OF THE THEATRES”





## CHAPTER I.

### THE BURNING OF THE THEATRES.

It might have been thought that London had its sufficient share of theatrical conflagrations in the destruction that had overtaken the handsome Opera-house and Pantheon only a few years before. But a more extraordinary disaster was now to take place in the burning, within a few months of each other, of the two great patent theatres thus, within twenty years, five theatres of the first class, on which enormous sums had been expended, were consumed by fire—a singular and unique fatality. On the morning of September 20th, 1808, about four o'clock, Covent Garden Theatre was found to have caught fire. No water could be procured, though there were plenty of engines, and the roof presently falling in, the destruction was complete. Over twenty persons lost their lives.

The insurances did not exceed 50,000*l*,\* and the savings from the Shakespeare premises about 3500*l* more, the whole not more than one-fourth part of the sum requisite to replace the theatre. The *actual loss* was immense, besides the usual

\* In a pamphlet of some years later, inspired evidently by the patentees, I find it stated, in reference to insurance, that it is *impossible* to insure the theatres for more than an eighth of their value. The premium demanded is three guineas per cent, the rate of common insurances being two shillings

stock of scenery, there was an additional quantity for a new melodrama, which was shortly to have been brought forward. The Bedford and Piazza Coffee-houses escaped the flames, owing to a wall which had been erected by the proprietors of the theatre a short time before, to guard *themselves* from the danger of the adjoining premises.

“The organ, left by Handel as a legacy to the theatre, stated to be worth upwards of 1000 guineas, and which was only used for the oratorios, was consumed; the Beefsteak Club, which held its meetings at the top of the theatre, lost its stock of wines, valued at 1500*l*; Mr Ware, the leader of the band, lost a violin worth 300*l*, which had been left behind that night for the first time in two years; Mr. Munden, his wardrobe, not to be replaced under 300*l*; Miss Bolton, her jewels; and the other performers property, in the aggregate, to a considerable amount. Some of the private houses were not insured, and others but partially. The receipts of the preceding night’s performance, with the books and papers belonging to Mr. Brandon’s office, were the only property of consequence belonging to the theatre saved.”

English energy soon set itself to repair the calamity, and within little more than three months, on the 30th of December, the first stone of a new house was laid by the Prince Regent. The fortunate Kemble, who was remarked during the elaborate ceremonial arrayed in blue and white, received a present from a duke, whom he had once obliged in some trifling matter, of 10,000*l*. Mr Smirke was appointed the architect, and a ponderous, heavy-looking building, something after the pattern of the Acropolis, was erected within a year. The money, amounting to 300,000*l*, was raised partly by subscription, partly by shares of 500*l*. each, the Prince and many others taking two shares each, which covered 50,000*l*. of the expenses but these were to be paid off with five per cent. interest,

amounting to 2500*l*. The insurance money reached 44,000*l*. Kemble and the managers probably raised the rest. It was built to contain 3000 persons. The receipts, when full, were equal to nearly 700*l*. This, with good management, allowed of vast profits, even though the outlay and expenses were of growing extravagance \*

The opening of the great theatre, the exterior of which, it was boasted, was one of the most imposing in Europe, so far from having the conspicuous effect anticipated, was celebrated by the well-known disastrous series of riots. These were prompted by an attempt of the managers to increase their profits, and, indeed, it was fairly shown later, that otherwise they could not have been recouped for their great outlay †. This was done by laying out rows of private boxes with small saloons attached, while the mob were sent aloft to remote galleries, where they could scarcely see or hear. The frightful scenes of disorder that went on for weeks during the "O. P." riots, uncontrolled by managers or police, inflicted irreparable disaster and impaired the prestige of the new theatre. The managers had at last to capitulate. I do not dwell on these disorders, as the incidents are so familiar.

It was remarkable that, when the theatre was burning, all the Drury Lane *employés* had been busily at work on the roof of their house, keeping off the fiery flakes which fell profusely. They little dreamt that a similar fate was in store for the house they were protecting. On the evening of February 24th, 1809, when there had been no performance, Covent Garden was once more lit up by the flames; Mathews

\* One item alone will show the progressive rate of expenditure. The original ground-rent in 1733 was only 100*l*, thirty years later it became 300*l*, and thirty years later again 940*l*. By 1825 it had reached 2000*l* !

† The Governor of the Bank of England and other gentlemen to whom the accounts were submitted, vouched that the profit on the new prices could not exceed 3½ per cent, and on the old there would be a loss of ¼ per cent.

was dining with some friends in Lincoln's Inn Fields, when a servant rushed in with the news. The whole party rushed to the scene to try and rescue their goods, for Mathews had a valuable collection of wigs (Garrick's), some had jewellery; and they succeeded in dragging out an enormous chest. Before twelve o'clock the whole was in a blaze. "I stood," says Mr. Boaden, "with my boots covered with water, until I saw the figure on the summit (the Apollo) sink into the flames." The fire was appalling, and could be seen for miles, everything was destroyed—books, papers, etc.—save Mathews's wigs and Mrs. Jordan's dresses, etc. Sheridan was said to have witnessed it at a coffee-house, saying pleasantly "that a man might sit at his own fireside." A grand scheme for laying out the outer portion of the building in shops and taverns had been devised by Sheridan, and the plans arranged. It is amusing to contrast this with Kemble's theatrical demeanour.

Mr. F. Place, in his interesting MS. notes, describes how, on this catastrophe, Sheridan at once agreed with Lingham, of the Strand, for his interest in the Lyceum Theatre, where he proposed carrying on the performances till the theatre was rebuilt.

The arrangements were almost made when, by some misunderstanding, Mr. Arnold stepped in, and the Lyceum was let to him. He thus was enabled to deal with the Drury Lane actors on profitable terms. They finished the season. The next winter, on September 13th, 1809, "upon the joint application of all parties principally concerned," a licence was granted to Colonel Greville, Tom Sheridan, and Arnold. Mr. Place says volumes might be filled with the intrigues that were behind this arrangement, and hints sarcastically at the description of "those principally concerned," which included Mr. Greville, who was not concerned at all. Thus the improvident Sheridan was unlucky even in this. He was, in truth, ruined from that

moment, and though all claims on the house—complicated and conflicting to an alarming degree—must revive on the rebuilding, he set all his energies to start the plan at once. He succeeded in persuading Mr. Whitbread, the brewer, an admirable man of business and a politician of influence, to take the matter up.

Mr. Whitbread was a man much respected and full of energy, with a ready good humour that made him popular\*. He carried the scheme through—and it was one of stupendous magnitude—with wonderful perseverance and success. A committee was formed of Mr. Peter Moore, Lord Holland, Mr. Lyttleton, and others, who, after much investigation into the claims, that seemed hopelessly confused, drew up a plan. On October 14th, 1811, a meeting was held, and the following scheme adopted.

The *debts* of the theatre amounted to 436,971*l.*, and the dormant patent was to be purchased. The payment was made to Mr. White for his interest therein. It also pointed out that it was the interest of all the claimants to come into the terms, *which was 25 per cent for the arrears due to them*. When the late theatre was consumed, *the rent due to the Duke of Bedford was 4250*l.**, but with a degree of munificence he said he would forego the sum altogether, and would also set free the money due from the insurance offices. The example of the duke was followed in many instances by others. The debts due to the 500*l.* shareholders amounted in 1809 to 43,912*l.* 10*s.* The number of names were 224, and many were in the hands of executors, minors, and widows. 191 had compromised their claims, and many had abandoned them altogether. Of the next class, out of 330, only 4 had refused to sign. The next class of creditors were the 3000*l.* shareholders, who were entitled to 1*l.* each night of performance when the theatre was

\* His reply to the rude Tory member who described him contemptuously in the House of Commons as "a brewer of bad beer," was admirable for its adroitness and good humour. A *fracas* was anticipated, but he rose and said "Mr. Speaker, I call him to order for abusing *the article which I sell*."

open, whose debt amounted to 105,000*l.*, but out of 25 of this description of claimants, 20 had signed, and only 1 refused. The debt due to this class of claimants could be *extinguished for the sum of 26,000*l.** There was due to the old renters, being in number 221 persons, 15,245*l.*, which could be *bequeathed for 3811*l.** The creditors on the trust-deed, consisting of authors, performers, tradespeople, and others, *had due to them 52,611*l.** Out of 189 persons, 118 had accepted the compromise, so that the debt could be extinguished for 13,168*l.* The claim for private boxes was 9625*l.*, and lastly was that of the proprietors themselves. They had an interest in the concern, and by allowing them the same terms, the matter would stand thus Mr Sheridan held a half, for which it was proposed to *give him 24,000*l.**, Mr. Thomas Sheridan had a *fourth*, which would be 12,000*l.*; and Mrs. Richardson had a quarter, for which 24,000*l.* was to be given, but, as only part of the money had been paid, it was proposed to give her 6000*l.*, by which the subscribers would have the whole of the concern, and none of the old proprietors would have anything to do with it whatever. The whole of the *debt of 436,971*l.* could be compromised for one fourth.* The committee recommended the joint stock to be 300,000*l.*, which would be competent to erect the theatre, liquidate the debts, and purchase a wardrobe. The committee were of opinion that a commodious, elegant, and suitable theatre may be erected for 150,000*l.* The committee calculated that the interest of the money, with rent, taxes, etc. to be provided for, would be about 17,000*l.* per annum. There would be to meet this expense 600*l.* a year for vaults under the theatre, 200*l.* per annum for the site of a tavern, a limited number of private boxes, 5000*l.* a year, and the rent of houses belonging to the concern, 600*l.* a year. It was estimated that the receipts of the theatre each season, after deducting rent, taxes, etc., would be a sum of 49,000*l.*

#### THE PATENT OF 1811.

George the Third, by the grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc. To all to whom these presents shall come, greeting. Whereas, by an act which passed in Parliament in the

fiftieth year of our reign, entitled, "An Act for the rebuilding of the late Theatre Royal, Drury Lane," upon the conditions and under the regulations therein mentioned, our trusty and well-beloved Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, Esquires, are appointed trustees for the purpose therein mentioned And whereas, by another Act which passed in Parliament in the fifty-second year of our reign, entitled, "An Act for altering and enlarging the Powers of an Act of his present Majesty for rebuilding the late Theatre Royal, Drury Lane," provision is made for the appointment of successors to the said trustees respectively Now know ye that we, for divers good causes and considerations us thereunto moving of our especial grace, certain knowledge and motion, have given and granted, and by these presents for us, our heirs and successors, do give and grant unto the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, in trust for the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, company of proprietors, for and during the full end and term of *twenty-one years*, to commence from the *second day of September*, in the year of our Lord Christ, *one thousand eight hundred and sixteen*, full power, licence, and authority, to gather together, form, entertain, govern, privilege, and keep a company of comedians for our service, *to exercise and act tragedies, plays, operas, and other performances on the stage*, within a house to be built in Drury Lane, or within any other house built, or to be built, where they can best be fitted for that purpose, within the city of Westminster, and within the limits thereof, and within such place where we, our heirs and successors shall reside, and during such residence only such house, or houses, to be built (if occasion shall require, to be assigned and allotted out by the chief officer of our works) for a theatre or playhouse, with necessary attiring and retiring rooms, and other places convenient, of such extent and dimensions as the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, shall think fitting, *wherein tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, music, scenes, and all other entertainments of the stage whatsoever may be shown and presented*, which said company shall be our servants, and styled our Royal Company of Comedians, and shall consist of such numbers as the said



Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, shall from time to time think meet, and we do hereby, for us, our heirs and successors, grant unto the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, full power, licence, and authority to permit such persons, at and during the pleasure of the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, from time to time to act plays and entertainments of the stage of all sorts, peaceably and quietly, *without the impeachment or impediment of any person or persons whatsoever*, for the honest recreation of such as shall desire to see the same, nevertheless under the regulations hereinafter mentioned, and such others as the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors or assigns, from time to time in their discretion, shall find reasonable and necessary for our service; and we do hereby, for us, our heirs and successors, further grant to them, the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, as aforesaid, that it shall, and may be lawful to and for the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, to take and receive of such of our subjects as shall resort to see or hear any such *tragedies, plays, operas, or other entertainments whatsoever*, such sum or sums of money as either have accustomedly been given and taken in the like kind, or as shall be thought reasonable by them, in regard of the great expenses of building, hiring, and fitting up the said theatre. And further, for us, our heirs and successors, we do hereby give and grant unto the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, full power to make such allowances out of that which they shall so receive by the acting of tragedies, plays, operas, or other entertainments of the stage as aforesaid, to the actors and other persons employed in acting, representing, or in any quality whatsoever in and about the said theatre, as the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, shall think fit, and that the said company shall be

under the sole government and authority of the said Samuel Whitbread, Peter Moore, and Harvey Christian Coombe, their successors and assigns, and all scandalous and mutinous persons shall from time to time by them be ejected and disabled from playing in the said theatre. And for the better attaining our royal purposes in this behalf, we have thought it fit hereby to declare that henceforth no representation be admitted on the stage, by virtue or under colour of these our letters patent, whereby the Christian religion in general or the Church of England may in manner suffer reproach, strictly inhibiting every degree of abuse or misrepresentation of sacred characters tending to expose religion itself and to bring it into contempt, and that no such character be otherwise introduced or placed in any other light than such as may enhance the just esteem of those who truly answer the end of their sacred function, we further enjoin the strictest regard to such representation as any way may concern civil policy or the constitution of our government, that these may contribute to the support of our sacred authority and the preservation of order and good government. And it being our royal will and pleasure that for the future our theatre may be instrumental to the promotion of virtue and instructive to human life We do hereby command and enjoin that no new play, or old or revived play, be acted under the authority hereby granted, containing any passages or expressions offensive to piety and to good manners, until the same be corrected and purged by the said governors from all such offensive and scandalous passages and expressions, and these our letters patent, or the enrolment, or exemplification thereof, shall be in and by all things good, firm, valid, sufficient, and effectual in the law, according to the true intent and meaning thereof, anything in these presents contained to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding, or any other omission, imperfection, defect, matter, cause, or thing whatsoever, to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding In witness whereof we have caused these our letters to be made patent. Witness our seal at Westminster, 19th June, in the fifty-second year of our reign, by writ of Privy Seal.

WILMOT.

The final arrangements were, that the dormant patent should not be acted upon, but a new and short "running" patent for thirty years should be obtained

The plan one Rowles had entered into an agreement to execute, and to have it finished on or before the 1st of October next, under a penalty of 20,000*l*. Mr. Wyatt, the architect, had entered into a similar engagement to execute his part, under a penalty of 5000*l*. The building was pushed on with extraordinary energy and rapidity. The first stone was laid on October 29th, 1811, and the house actually opened on October 10th, 1812. It was to prove a smaller house than the old "Apollo" Theatre, which held 3611 persons, producing 826*l* 6*s*. The new one, at this time, held 2810 persons, producing 750*l*.

But there were other difficulties in the way. Those who favoured "free trade in the theatres" now felt that here was an opportunity not to be lost for making an attempt at enlarging the number of playhouses, and a serious effort was made to procure a licence for a new and independent theatre. There was an application made to the Privy Council, where Sheridan appeared in person to oppose it and argued the question, meeting all objections with great spirit, and eventually success.

A bill was introduced into Parliament for a new theatre. A rather serious case could be made out against these old houses, of maladministration opposed to the spirit of the great trust given to them. In their greed for large audiences and large profits they had erected, and were erecting, enormous structures, which were destructive of the very entertainment they were bound to provide. Petitions were sent to the House and also to the Privy Council. The scheme was supported by the Lord Mayor, many members of Parliament, and "City men." The capital was fixed at 200,000*l*, and would have been found. Being referred to the law officers, who reported against the plan, the petitions were heard before the

Council on March 10th, 1810 The arguments were ingenious It was asked, very pertinently. "How was it that the single great theatre, now that Drury Lane did not exist, was not full?"

My position (said one of the counsel) is this that the houses are empty from the natural incommodiousness of them. They may be occasionally and accidentally filled by the representation of a new play, or the performance of a favourite actor, but, in general, they will be deserted from the want of accommodation. Unless these houses be totally altered, we shall not take away persons from them In their present state they are certainly more fit for a Spanish bull-fight than for theatrical performances If curiosity ever induced any of your lordships to visit the places appropriated for the accommodation of the humbler classes, you would find that, looking down from the height through the vast concave, the actors appear like the inhabitants of Lilliput Not a feature of the face can be distinguished, far less the variations and flexibility of muscles, the turn of the eye and graceful action. It is impossible to exert the human voice to that extent as to be heard in those places, and still to retain the power of modulating its tones Further, in a memorial drawn up on behalf of Mrs. Richardson (representing a quarter share of the patents and other remaining property of the late Drury Lane Theatre), it is asserted that "the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre have it in their power to prove incontrovertibly to any person that their theatre (and it is supposed that they might safely add that of Covent Garden) could have held, taking the average through every season since its construction, *double the number it has ever received.*" In the next year Sheridan, in the House of Commons, assigned a cause for the ill-success of the theatre. "It was the taste of the town that perverted the theatre Mr Kemble would much rather, he was sure, act on his own two legs than call in the aid of cavalry; but the fact was, that the taste of the town was more gratified by them."

During the course of this incident various petitions were addressed to the Council by the proprietors of the different

theatres, by those interested by investment and otherwise. Elliston, Kemble, Harris, Mrs. Thomas Sheridan, Arnold, and others, were among the number, the whole giving a very complete sketch of the state of the theatres. The encouragement that had been given to the monopoly by the highest authorities made the case one of hardship, yet it was clear that it was already impossible to continue in the old course of monopoly. Though the bill was defeated, it was plainly shown in the course of the debate that the Government was not favourable to the monopoly. Sheridan and his son were dealt with handsomely, receiving 40,000*l*, out of which they were to satisfy the claim of the Linleys

## CHAPTER II

### NEW DRURY LANE THEATRE—KEAN.

THE new theatre which is now standing, having enjoyed a long life of over seventy years, is nearly the same as it was when erected. It is, in truth, a noble, spacious, and finely-conceived edifice, reflecting the traditions of a good classical school. It is impossible to enter and pass through its halls, vestibules, and rotundas without a sense of dignity and proportion. The architect had formed a true conception, which he was allowed to carry out untrammelled. This sense of just proportion and dignity is sadly lacking in modern temples. The exterior is indeed not imposing, but it has never been completed. It should be added, however, that it is professedly modelled after what is perhaps the finest theatre in Europe—the one at Bordeaux. This can be seen by a comparison of the plans, though the beautiful arrangement of short balconies, supported between pillars, has not been followed in the English house. On entering the theatre the visitor finds himself in a great vestibule or crush-room, which opens again on the rotunda, a noble and imposing circular hall reaching to the roof, with a gallery running round, whence, to the right and left, open all the approaches to the various stairs. These are laid out in a bold airy way, and are very striking.

The first manager was Mr. Arnold, later of the English Opera-house at the Lyceum, while Raymond, author of the amusing biography of Elliston, was stage-manager. To give a suitable *éclat* to the opening it was resolved to offer a prologue—then a necessary adjunct to the stage, and a happy link between the two worlds on both sides of the curtain. A prize of twenty guineas was offered for the best composition. About one hundred were sent in, all so indifferent that Lord Holland suggested applying to Lord Byron. He at first declined, but, anxious to oblige Lord Holland, consented, and laboured hard at his task, submitting with great modesty various versions. “Tell Lady Holland,” he wrote, “I have sad work to keep out the Phoenix—I mean the fire-office of that name. It insured the theatre, and why not the address?” It was delivered by Elliston. It, however, had one admirable result, enriching the language with the well-known “Rejected Addresses,” the hasty work of two obscure young men, and one of the wittiest effusions in the language.\*

Unhappily, towards the end of 1814, a sad catastrophe, which shocked the whole town, deprived the theatre of the energetic man of business to whom it was indebted for existence. Mr. Whitbread’s mind, overstrained by mental labours (Mr. Moore says by those of the theatre), gave way. He had not slept for weeks, and, in a moment of delirium, destroyed himself.†

The committee of “noblemen and gentlemen” now determined on the bold and original step of *managing* the great house themselves, and deputed the task to a sort of sub-committee, consisting of Lords Essex and Byron, Mr. Douglas Kinnaird, Mr. Peter Moore, M.P., and others. This absurd

\* The genuine “Rejected Addresses” were also published in a volume

† Lady C Bury states that a sharp fragment, or spicule, of the skull was found pressing into the brain

and perilous step was in the end, as was to be expected, fraught with disaster, and for three seasons the "noblemen and gentlemen" made experiments and amused themselves at the same time. Lord Byron has recorded some recollections of this *bizarre* period

When I belonged to the Drury Lane Committee, and was one of the stage committee of management, the number of plays upon the shelves was about five hundred. Conceiving that amongst them there must be *some* of merit, in person and by proxy, I caused an investigation. I do not think that of those which I saw there was one which could be tolerated

He then applied to Maturin and Coleridge

Sir J. B. Burgess also presented *four tragedies* and a farce, which I handed to the Green-room and Stage Committee, but they would not do. Then the scenes I had to go through! The authors and authoresses—the milliners and the wild Irishmen—the people from Brighton, from Blackwall, from Chatham, from Cheltenham, from Dublin, from Dundee, who came in upon me! to all of whom it was proper to give a civil answer, and a hearing, and, ah me! sometimes a reading

Mrs Glover's father, an Irish dancing-master of sixty years, called upon me to request to play Archer, dressed in silk stockings, on a frosty morning, to show his legs (which were certainly good for his age, and very Irish). Miss Emma Somebody, with a play, entitled "*The Bandit of Bohemia*," or some such title, Mr. O'Higgins—resident at Richmond—with an Irish tragedy, in which the protagonist was chained by the leg to a pillar during the chief part of the performance. The author was a wild man, of savage appearance, and the difficulty of not laughing at him was only to be got over by reflecting on the probable consequences with such a ruffian.

As I am really a civil and polite person, and hate giving pain when it can be avoided, I sent these applicants up to Douglas Kinnard, who is a man of business, and sufficiently ready with a negative, and so left them to settle with him.

Players are said to be impracticable people. They are so,



but I managed to steer clear of any disputes with them, and excepting one debate with the elder Byrne about Miss Smith's *pas de*—something (I forget the technicals), I do not remember any litigation of my own. I used to protect Miss Smith, because she was like Lady Jane Harley in the face, and likenesses go a great way with me indeed. Then the committee—next, the sub-committee—we were but few, and never agreed. There was Peter Moore, who contradicted Kinnaird, and Kinnaird, who contradicted everybody.

There were two managers, Rae and Dibdin, and our secretary, Ward. We were all very zealous, and in earnest to do good service, and so forth. Hobhouse furnished us with prologues to our revived old English plays, but was not pleased with us for complimenting him as the “Upton” of our theatre (Mr. Upton is, or was, the poet who writes the songs for Astley's), and almost gave up prologuising in consequence.

He wrote to Moore

My new function consists in listening to the despair of Cavendish Bradshaw, the hopes of Kinnaird, the wishes of Lord Essex, the complaints of Whitbread, and the calculations of Peter Moore, all of which and whom seem totally at variance. O Bradshaw wants to light the theatre with *gas*, which may perhaps (if the vulgar be believed) poison half the audience and all the *dramatis personæ* \* Essex has endeavoured to persuade Kean not to get drunk, the consequence of which is, that he has never been sober since. Kinnaird, with equal success, would have convinced Raymond that he, the said Raymond, had too much salary. Whitbread wants us to assess the pit another sixpence—a d——d insidious proposition—which will end in an O P combustion. To crown all, Robins, the auctioneer, has the impudence to be displeased because he has no dividend. The man is a proprietor of shares, and a long-headed orator in the meetings.

\* The reader will note the allusion to the lighting of Drury Lane with gas. That mode of illumination was destined to obtain in playhouses for some seventy years, and as I write is giving place to a newer and more perfect form of lighting. The Haymarket continued to be lit with oil till so recently as 1852 or 1853.

In the pantomime of 1815 there was a representation of the masquerade of 1814 given to the allied sovereigns and Wellington & Co. Douglas Kinnaird, and one or two others, with myself, put on masks, and went on the stage with the *οι πολλοι* to see the effect of a theatre from the stage. It is very grand. Douglas danced among the *figurantes*, and they were puzzled to find out who we were. In the dispute between the ballet-master and Miss Smith, both rushed to me to decide it, which I did in favour of Miss Smith.

"It is really very good fun," he wrote to a friend, "as far as the daily and nightly stir of these strutters and fretters go, and if the concern could be brought to pay a shilling in the pound, would do much credit to the management." But by a strange freak of fortune, when all things were going rapidly to the bad, the committee of "noblemen and gentlemen" seems to have floundered into good fortune. This was the almost accidental engagement of Kean, the glory of Drury Lane, and whose statue ornaments the rotunda. The tale has been often told. Everyone knows of the 8*l* a week, the neglect and almost contempt of the managers and actors. His first appearance in London was not his first "on any stage," and it is curious that there should be no instance of a triumphant *first* appearance, the nearest to which is Garrick's, who had only appeared a few times in the country.

It must be said that the intelligent committee could not take any credit for dramatic instinct in their giving the new actor this chance, as, even after they had made their bargain, and seen him, they seemed inclined to be rid of it.

"On arriving in the metropolis," says Mr. Hawkins, "he secured for his lodgings a dismantled, comfortless garret in Cecil Street, Strand. On the following morning Arnold introduced him to the Drury Lane Committee. They only saw a little self-possessed man, the native pallor of whose face was heightened by the contrast it exhibited to the penetrating

brillhancy of his eyes and the shabby-genteel mourning he wore in memory of his lost son."

"On his first rehearsing the part of Shylock, so little interest," says a witness, "seemed to be attached to Mr. Kean's success, that, through one excuse or other sent by performers for non-attendance, there were, in some scenes, only the new actor, and myself as prompter, on the stage I apologised to Mr. Kean for this seeming neglect, which he appeared quite indifferent about He did not at rehearsal speak so as to convey any very magnificent idea of what he meant to do; yet, as I had formerly seen in Cooke, there was a judicious something in his quietude that augured well. Mr. Wroughton, who was rehearsing King Henry, whispered me 'This gentleman's an actor!'"

One rehearsal alone was allowed him, which was thus a source of annoyance and trial. The actors were contemptuous and made merry at his figure by observing: "Who is the little man in the capes?" The night of his triumph was January 26th, 1814

This was the only channel through which the public were informed of the approaching *début*, and the actor was so unprepared, that, on the morning when the announcement appeared, he, dispirited, furious, and rendered desperate by the wretched condition to which the malice of the committee had reduced him, sallied forth from Cecil Street with a half-formed determination to commit suicide. Fortunately, however, he was met by a friend who acquainted him with the welcome news.

The committee, after the tide of success had begun to roll, of course loaded him with attention and civilities. Byron became his rapturous admirer, and made him costly presents. At the end of the season, the management was enabled to announce a sum of 18,000*l.* profit, and the proprietors received

their five per cent dividend At the end of the season, 1816, he was presented by the company and committee, in the green-room, with a splendid cup, valued at 300 guineas.

During the season 1813-14, the gross receipts amounted to 68,329*l.* 1*s* 6*d*, of which Kean's sixty-eight nights produced 32,942*l.* 12*s.* 6*d*. Yet, on the season, there was a loss of 20,000*l*

Mr F. Hawkins has written an entertaining life of this great actor But no idea could be given of the wild extravagance of this strange being. At a sale of autographs some years ago, a number of his letters were disposed of, and such scraps as these were given in the catalogue

From Douglas, Isle of Man, September 2nd, he wrote "I will postpone will-making till a future opportunity" In consequence of domestic disagreements, he says, "I am not sure whether I shall not be compelled to buy an American annuity, and retire to some cottage in the Canadas—the world forgetting' and 'by the world forgot,'" etc On September 10th, 1826, he sent an account of his success in America "Though money is made by engagements, it is a d—— long way to get to them" . . . He is receiving the homage of lords, generals, colonels, the governor and his lady, etc "This all reminds me of ancient times, but I am seized at the same moment with the d—— cholera morbus" . . . He sometimes nets 200*l.* a night "I am enchanted with the Canadas; the beauty of the country—not equalled in the world—the *politesse* of the French, the hospitality of the English; the deference paid to talent, and all associated under the British flag, commands an attachment bordering on romance . . . We differ on one point, you lament the fall of Elliston, I rejoice at it. The tricker is tricked !!!" From Quebec, September 25th, 1826 "The profits are great when I act, but the drawbacks immense, I have lost nine days of my present engagement from the infernal cholera morbus I have been obliged to pay a consultation of physicians, who, with perfect *sang froid*, told me to prepare for the worst, and asked me whether I was Protestant or Catholic, that they might send a reverend gentle-

man to perform the last acts of consolation . . . So I got up, shook my feathers, went and acted Richard the Third to a brilliant audience, and have been improving in health ever since!" From Paris, July 11th, 1824. Relative to the action "Cox v. Kean," he says, "I daresay many of my letters are very silly, and will create some laughter in a court of justice, but they are not more preposterous than those of greater men, who have been, like me, the victims of the *amor parvum honestas*, for instance, the Duke of York, the King, Paget, Anglesea, etc etc." From Dublin, August 26th, 1824 "I cannot send you any money, for the best of all possible reasons, I have none to send—for the first time in my theatrical career" The remainder of the letter is occupied with full details, in relation to the Cox affair, and relates several circumstances which do not excuse his offence, in either a moral or legal view of it, but afford a measure of palliation, an opinion which the jury seemed to entertain upon the evidence adduced, by their verdict of *one farthing* damages From Belfast, November 26th, 1824 Relative to the "Cox" affair, "I positively declare against the use of Mr. Drury's name; I owe everything to the family, and cannot consent to blend the sacred name with two such rascals as myself and the alderman," with other passages strongly recriminatory of the other side.

In 1814 was to be exhibited an unlucky instance of the lack of judgment or of information in the amateur management The leading lady at the Dublin Theatre was Miss Walstein, and during her illness a young actress had taken her place with extraordinary success Munden, who had played with her in Dublin, spoke of her everywhere with admiration, but the committee chose to think the older-established lady was a more certain chance, and engaged her. She proved a correct but ordinary actress. The other, who was Miss O'Neill, was secured by the rival house, and at once took Mrs Siddons's place With that great actress she was, of course, not to be compared, but she had extraordinary

powers of sympathy and nature, and at once took the town.\*

Lord Byron had taken up the cause of Mrs Mardyn, an attractive-looking actress, and it was stated that this advocacy was one of the grounds for his separation from his wife.

One of the most interesting and ever touching scenes is that of the farewell or retirement of a great performer As Garrick used to say, "it was a species of death" It is the taking leave of a world never to be seen again. That of Kemble and his great sister were attended by every tribute of respect and admiration that could be devised On June 29th, 1812, Mrs. Siddons had withdrawn, though this was not to prove her last appearance Her brother remained until June 23rd, 1817, when to the most flattering testimonials of regard and admiration—a public banquet, a handsome present, Talma coming from Paris, etc—he also retired. She was only fifty-seven and he sixty-seven, an early withdrawal in comparison with the long inglorious lingerings on to seventy and eighty that mark our era With these great performers may be said to have ended the great period of acting, founded on theatres with traditions and systems, and fixed corps of actors. After them, all began to disband swiftly. Managing and acting was henceforth to be thrown open to anyone with moderate gifts and assurance, and later, in our time, to anyone with money and leisure

The various and numerous officers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden were remarkable personages in their way, and seemed, to a certain extent, characters out of the comedies of

\* Miss O'Neill and her relations, it is well known, supplied the hint of Mr Thackeray's *The Fotheringay* and *Captain Costigan* She later left the stage, on marrying Mr Becher, afterwards Sir William Becher, and died six or seven years ago

the time There was Hull, for instance, the acting manager of Covent Garden—"Tommy Hull," a worthy man, who was always put forward to make announcements or apologies to the audience From this his friend Dibdin says

He had acquired a habit of framing all his speeches, however private or familiar his audience, in the *precise style of his theatrical apologies* One night of public rejoicing he gave the mob in Martlett Court, Bow Street, where he then resided, a barrel of porter, and, moblike, as soon as they had drunk it, they began to break his windows in order to get more Mr Hull addressed the crowd exactly in the urbane and gentlemanly tone and manner which he always so naturally assumed on the stage "Ladies and gentlemen, I lament exceedingly to be under the necessity of offering an apology this evening, but I am obliged to state that all the *strong* beer has disappeared, and in this predicament, having, at a very short notice, procured a cask of *small*, we hope to meet with your usual indulgence.

Raymond, the well-known prompter at Drury Lane, where he long held office, was a man of distinct character, one of the last on whom the traditions of the place seem to have operated. He was born "Tamie Grant," in Scotland, in the year 1765, and set out in life, like Dodsley, as a servant. He went to Ireland in the following of Lord Westmoreland, after which time, getting bitten with the stage, he changed his name to Raymond, and took regularly to the profession, having laboured assiduously and successfully to get rid of his broad Scotch accent. He succeeded in getting an engagement at Drury Lane, where he fairly established himself. As his friend Pryce Gordon said of him, "his literary attainments were quite wonderful, considering the circumstances of his early life," and, as I have said, his account of Elliston is extraordinary for its workmanship, spirit, and humour.

Raymond's fate was somehow to be connected with that of the great establishment he served. He was, indeed, an excellent specimen of the useful trusted servants who are so rarely found. When the incapable committee was mismanaging Drury Lane, we are told, he was, as might be supposed, like "a toad under a harrow," stimulated by his own taste and zeal on the one hand, and thwarted by the opposing interests and discordant opinions of the committee. "For many months he lived and slept within the walls of the theatre, and often, for nights together, had no repose but what he snatched at intervals on the sofa in the manager's room. These labours, combined with unquestionable taste and ability, were, nevertheless, unequal to his position, and having at length made up his mind that he could not usefully serve so many masters, he retired to his house in Chester Street, Grosvenor Place, where he devoted the night to a letter of remonstrance to the committee, and had proceeded through many pages, when his anxiety of mind and his exhaustion of body brought on a stroke of paralysis, and he was found extended on the floor, at an early hour of the morning, and expired within a few hours."

A more remarkable person, however, was Peake, the treasurer of Drury Lane, and also author of innumerable successful dramas. His friend Planché thus describes him

He was not a wit in the true sense of the word. There is not a scintilla of wit in any of his dramas or in his conversation, but there was some good fun in a few of his farces, and he had a happy knack of "fitting" his actors. His farces were usually damned the first night, and recovered themselves wonderfully afterwards. A striking instance of this was "A Hundred-Pound Note," at Covent Garden, in which the conundrums, bandied between Power and Keeley, were violently hissed on the first representation, and received with roars of laughter subsequently. His extreme good temper and obliging nature made him a universal favourite. He was devotedly



attached to Mr. Arnold, whose bond for 200*l*, in acknowledgment of his long and faithful service, he generously thrust into the breakfast-room fire before him, the morning after the burning down of the Lyceum Theatre (February 16th, 1830), saying, "You have lost all by fire, let this go too" He died a poor man A singular circumstance (oddly adds Mr. Planché), considering that he had been for so many years treasurer of a theatre

He was a dry fellow (goes on Mr Planché) that Billy Dunn, a great character During the many years he was treasurer of Drury Lane I don't suppose he once witnessed a performance, but regularly, after the curtain had fallen on a new piece, it mattered not of what description, he would let himself through with his pass-key from the front of the house, as if he had sat it out, and on being asked his opinion, invariably answer, after a long pause and a proportionate pinch of snuff, "Wants cutting" Nine times out of ten he was right The trouble of extracting a direct reply from him, at any time or concerning anything, was remarkable I called one morning at the theatre, on my way to the City, to ask him a question about writing orders on some particular night I was told he was in the treasury, and accordingly ran up to it He was alone at his desk counting cheques "Would there be any objection, Dunn, to my sending a friend or two to the boxes on such a night?" He looked at me, but made no answer. I waited perhaps five more minutes, and then, without repeating my inquiry, or speaking another word, walked quietly out of the room and went about my other business Returning between two and three in the afternoon I ascertained from the hall-keeper that Mr Dunn was still in the theatre I mounted the stairs again, entered the treasury, and found him, as before, alone I stood perfectly silent while he looked at me and took the customary pinch of snuff, after which he drawled out, "No, I should think not," some four hours having elapsed since I asked him the question

It may be mentioned in this place that there was a special box at Drury Lane known as the "Numberer's Box," and the office of numberer was long filled by Hardham, a snuffmaker

during the daytime. Garrick was good-natured enough to direct attention to a particular kind of snuff he sold by allusions from the stage, thus actually making "No. 37" celebrated. Another of his actors was a wine merchant, to whom he said one night on the boards, "If you could put a little of that excellent spirit which is in your wine into your acting"—and with the same wholesome result.

A player who contributed much to the successful working of the theatre about this time was a hard-working, patient, dramatic hack, Thomas Dibdin by name, who, without genius, knew thoroughly what the French call "the science of the boards." No better specimen could be given of the pains-taking drudge who could be depended on to supply what was wanted, in the best style and at the shortest notice. There is something almost pathetic in the incredible labour of this writer, who was a country actor, stage-manager at Drury Lane and the Haymarket, manager of theatres himself, translator, adapter, constructor of pantomimes, tragedies, burlettas, anything that was desired, yet all ending in ruin and bankruptcy. When he began life, earning a wretched crust in the country theatres, burdened with a family, he went through many hardships, even to "sharing," as it was called, the candle-ends, which was all that could be shared at the end of a performance. But he was ever cheerful and hopeful, and it is pleasant to read how the first break came which led him on to London and to prosperity. A successful farce attracted the notice of the managers. He hurried to London. Not only were his pieces taken, but he and his wife were engaged as performers. From that time he continued to supply pieces in the most extraordinary profusion, all for the most part fairly successful, to the number of two hundred! He wrote for every theatre and supplied every form of entertainment. There was this advantage in the great patent theatres,

that they furnished an opening for dramatic talent, new pieces being required almost every day. He says

Of the above nearly two hundred theatrical productions, ten were failures, and not acted more than four or five times each on an average, sixteen were honoured with extraordinary success, and produced very great profits to Covent Garden, Drury Lane, the Haymarket, the English Opera, and three of the minor theatres, the remainder were all extremely well received, and answered my purpose and the expectations of those who employed me. Nearly fifty of the pieces are published, and books of the songs of thirty more. It was formerly the custom for authors to dedicate their works to patrons of rank for the avowed purpose of receiving a *cadeau* in return. With this view, I inscribed certain productions of mine to the Duke of Leeds, Mr. Harris, Sir Henry Hawley, Mr. George Ranking, Mr. Fladgate, etc.

As a specimen of what can be done by energy, he tells us the following

I received a French piece on Tuesday night. My benefit was on the following Monday. Fitzwilliam advised I should play the piece for my benefit. I urged the impossibility. He urged the kind devotedness of the actors. But then, I had the piece to translate and adapt, and the songs to write, and there were three new scenes at least to be painted, *cum multis aliis*, such as dresses, properties, etc. to prepare. Notwithstanding, we concluded that an effort ought to be made, and then went to Drury Lane to see a *ci-devant* Surrey performer of the name of Weston make his *début*. I, who was still very unwell, translated the piece the next day in bed, read it on the Thursday, under the title of "The Invisible Witness, or, The Chapel in the Wood," and produced it on the Monday. After which, it was acted during the remainder of the season—*i.e.* about thirty nights.

The story of this hardworking man is worthy of study, though not encouraging. It may be said that there is no pro-

fession which offers more examples of that patient, persevering labour which leads eventually to the highest success, and which is attested by the career of the brilliant actor who now holds the first place on the stage. But what came so suddenly fell away almost as fast. After years of drudgery came embarrassment, harsh treatment by managers, haughty claims and dismissal, attempts at management, bankruptcy, and finally ruin.

## CHAPTER III.

### RISE OF THE MINOR THEATRES.

DURING all the years of amateur management the theatre had been sunk in debt to the amount of 90,000*l*.<sup>1</sup> In their desperation they were inclined to impute their disasters to any cause but their own misgovernment. They now fancied that the minor theatres were interfering with their business, and determined to appeal for protection against them. The condition of these houses was curious and doubtful, but of late years they had been looked on indulgently and even encouraged. At the beginning of the century the patents were still sufficiently protected, and the only theatres which were tolerated (excluding, of course, the Haymarket, which ranked with the grand houses) were the Circus, Astley's Amphitheatre (now the Olympic), Sadler's Wells, and the Royalty, of which three certainly were rather devoted to shows and spectacles than to plays. There were, moreover, what are called *summer theatres*—their licences only allowing them to open at that time.

The eccentric Elliston was to do good service in fighting the battles of the minor theatres against the great patent houses. This contest he carried on during a course of years in his own peculiar style, during which time he laid his

grievances before the public by appeals to the Chamberlain and others. He had become the proprietor of the Olympic Theatre about the year 1812, and by skilful management and the production of a couple of successful pieces succeeded in drawing the town. The proprietor of the Sans Pareil in the Strand (now the Adelphi) was almost as fortunate, and it was this extraordinary success that was now to rouse the jealousy and perhaps envy of the great patent theatres. The small houses had, however, been fortunate in the existing Lord Chamberlain—Lord Dartmouth—who, in 1809, had granted a licence for what was called “Summer English Opera” to Mr. Arnold for the Lyceum Theatre, and had promised to grant another for “Winter English Opera” to Colonel Greville, who had already held a licence of a limited kind. The licence to Astley seems comprehensive enough, and was a contribution to the gradual enfeebling of the patents that was going on steadily. It ran

I do hereby give leave and licence unto Philip Astley, Esq., to have performed, for his benefit, at the Olympic and musical Pavilion in Newcastle Street, in the Strand, within the liberties of Westminster, the entertainments of music, dancing, burlettas, spectacles, pantomimes, and horsemanship, for one year from the 5th day of July, 1812, to the 5th day of July, 1813. Given under my hand and seal this 1st day of July, 1812, in the fifty-second year of His Majesty's reign

INGRAM HERTFORD (L.S.)

The licence was later limited to the period between Michaelmas and Easter.

Astley passed to the Surrey, where he performed “equine” dramas of an exciting kind. In 1816, the old Lyceum was pulled down and the present finely-designed building erected. Notwithstanding the supposed advance in architecture, and the knowledge of theatrical resources, it

is still the finest and most beautifully-designed theatre in London, and lends itself, by its fine lines and spacious dimensions, to displays of scenic effect and admirable acting, which its accomplished manager inspires and supplies

As soon as this splendid building was completed, at a cost of some 80,000*l*, another English opera was set on foot, the manager proposing "to encourage native talent, and a School for English Music under the express sanction of His Majesty." But the patentees, thus attacked on all sides, again clamorously interfered. It was urged, and certainly with some reason, that English opera was but a colourable form—being an English drama with music and dialogue, whereas Italian was all music. They actually succeeded in limiting his summer season to four months, and the rest of the year had to be filled up with shows, etc. A few years saw it tenanted by Mathews, in a form of entertainment then almost a novelty.

But it was not until the year 1818 that they gathered their forces for a combined attack, and appealed to the Chamberlain, Lord Hertford, to interpose, and withdraw the licences from the two successful theatres, the Sans Pareil and the Olympic. The reasons they urged were principally these :

That the Olympic and Sans Pareil have become theatres for the nightly performance of the regular drama. That the memorialists, with all the respectable persons involved in the interests of Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres, must suffer "certain ruin" if the Olympic and Sans Pareil Theatres be continued. That on the faith of the continuance of an entire monopoly of theatrical entertainment (as such appears to be the meaning attempted to be annexed to the words "patent rights"), "a million of money has, of late years, been embarked" in Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres, "for the support of the national drama." That the patent rights of Drury Lane and Covent Garden

Theatres have been "swept away," and "shaken to the foundation," by the authority of the Lord Chamberlain, and "by the grant of the Lord Chamberlain's licences"—that although these events are attributable to "the authority of the Lord Chamberlain," and to the effect of the licences granted by him, still, that the proprietors of the Olympic and Sans Pareil Theatres have justly "forfeited their licences," because they have been the authors of the mischief, "by the entire change of the line of performances from those expressed in the terms of their licences," and that those theatres ought to be suppressed because their licences have "been scandalously abused;" while the licences themselves, as originally granted, are alleged to be the cause of all this unheard-of desolation. That it can easily be proved that burletta is distinguished from tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, etc. by its being a piece in verse, accompanied by music. That, for example, the pieces of "The Dragon of Wantley," "Midas," "The Golden Pippin," and "Poor Vulcan," are burlettas, and "totally different" from the pieces acted at the Olympic and Sans Pareil Theatres. That a serious injury is occasioned to Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres, because, as it can be proved, a sum exceeding 150*l*, on an average, is taken nightly at the doors of the Olympic and Sans Pareil Theatres, meaning, as I apprehend, the amount of the receipts of both theatres, nightly, and not of each. That the "great increase in the size" of the Olympic and Sans Pareil Theatres, since first licensed, is one of the chief points complained of, as the memorialists "suffer in the exact ratio to that increase."

In 1819, however, when the attraction of the great actor\* began to wane, the receipts at Drury Lane fell off, principally owing to the selection of new and indifferent plays. This was clearly attributable to the incapable management of the amateurs. They had reduced the prices, which was their chief blunder; for, as Mr Bunn lays it down "I have never found, from

\* They had given Kean voluntarily 20*l* a night for three years—though his engagement was for half the time, and he praised their liberality—when nearly 500*l* a night was coming into the house. But at the close of that term he had re-engaged at 50*l* a night, and did not "draw."



a long experience, theatrically speaking, that the price of the article at all interfered with the demand for it—the *public is not to be deterred from going to the play because the admission to the boxes is 7s., any more than it is to be attracted there, because the admission is only 5s* The quality of the *matériel*, and not the price, is the thing inquired into.” Sagacious words

With this tide of disaster they could not cope, and the company were at last invited to meet the committee, who suggested a reduction of all salaries over 4*l*. The players were filled with consternation, but were told by Lord Yarmouth, the Regent's friend, that the house must otherwise be closed “Then let it close!” cried Dowton\* from the crowd, “my voice is but one amongst many, but I will never consent to abandon a single farthing” He then offered to advance a draft for 500*l*, on security

The season lingered on for thirty additional nights, Kean playing to 87*l* receipts The only thing to be done was that the amateurs should resign and give way to professional men A subscription had to be set on foot to liquidate the debts of this junta, and new managers were invited When this became known, applications from all quarters poured in. The great actor himself made a proposal He offered 10,000*l*. a year “But,” he said, “I shut my doors against all committees, expecting an immediate surrender of their keys and all privileges in possession I select my own officers, my own performers, ‘my reason's in my will,’ and can only be accountable to the proprietors for payment of the rent, and to the public for their amusements. This is my offer—if they like it, so if not, farewell Read this aloud to the proprietors, and as much in earnest as I write it”

\* Dowton, who seems to have been somewhat miserly, had objected before to subscribe to the Kean testimonial, saying with some wit, “No, you may cup him, but you shan't bleed me”

But it seemed scarcely chivalrous that he should recommend himself by assailing them. "The public," he said, "had seen the mismanagement which has brought this magnificent theatre to ruin. Its restoration can only be achieved by a popular professional man. I now stand forward to devote my property, reputation, and experience to this great cause!" Unhappily, neither property nor experience avail for management unless there be a due restraint of manners, and no one would have been so unsuited to be cast for the part of manager as Mr Kean.

But there was another candidate, an extraordinary being—in his way clever, eccentric, a brilliant comedian—Robert William Elliston, who ever seems through his gay *persiflage* to be a sort of walking Charles Surface. In other respects he was a kind of theatrical Micawber, viewing everything *couleur de rose*, investing every scheme with a fairy-like magnificence. The chronicle left of his doings by his stage-manager, Raymond, written with corresponding spirit and even wit, makes one of the most extraordinary records conceivable. It is a "unique," as Lamb would say.

There were four offers made for the management, by Dibdin, Kean, Elliston, and Arnold. Arnold's was hardly a serious one, as he required to be indemnified against loss. Elliston's naturally appeared to be the most suitable, as he brought money into the concern. Mr Place, in his MS, tells us that this was no less a sum than 30,000*l*—an independence. He paid 2000*l*. down, and found security for 3000*l*. It has often been a subject of wonder, and has been spoken of as a proof of Elliston's skill in management, how he contrived to finance the theatre so successfully, paying salaries, rent, etc punctually for so many years. Mr Place furnishes the clue. Every farthing of the 30,000*l* capital was dissipated, and he was to leave it a ruined man, and without a shilling in the world!

This was one more instance of the ruinous infatuation of theatrical management, and it is easy to see that the flighty and ambitious manager thought the loss nothing as compared with the luxury of issuing his commands and flourishing as the monarch of old Drury. During his course he was to pay 65,000*l* in rent to the grasping committee, who, for a delay in paying 5000*l*, promptly evicted him.

Not an hour had elapsed since the publication of the notice for letting, when Elliston made a visit to his friend Winston. "Drury Lane Theatre is mine!" cried he, "for it is enough for me that it is to be had—the theatre is mine." He sat down with his confederate, and drew up a code of management, which, for clearness, foresight, equity, and spirit might have been considered a model of theatrical jurisprudence. He then sent in his proposals—viz to take the theatre for fourteen years, to expend 7000*l* on the building during the time, to pay 8000*l* rent for the first year, 9000*l* for the second and third, and 10,000*l* for the remainder of his term. These were accepted.

Lamb, indeed, thoroughly appreciated his humour, and described him as delightful on this occasion. "Have you heard the news!" said the actor proudly. "I am the lessee of Drury Lane!" and hurried on. He at once, in his magnificent style, made application to authors and actors, among them to Sir W. Scott to write, to Mrs. Siddons to return to the stage, but they were for the most part declined. Miss Kelly, also applied to, dictated the following singular conditions, which Mrs. Siddons would not have ventured on.

For three seasons; with liberty for Miss Kelly to absent herself during the six weeks in Lent, to have the exclusive use of her dresses. Salary to be 20*l* a week, but to be raised to equal any other actress who may be engaged. To have the most desirable dressing-room, with not more than one other lady, of the highest rank and respectability, the liberty to decline any new part or character, and also such parts in old

pieces as she does not consider adapted to her powers, to enjoy all privileges and indulgences granted to the most favoured performer, to be exempted from the condition of the sick clause, whenever sickness, etc shall arise out of the exercise of her profession, or any consequence thereof

The house was now newly decorated, and the lessee gave a ball and supper to exhibit the improvements On October 4th, it was opened with "Wild Oats" The receipts were 638*l*, and his first season produced 44,053*l* The company consisted of the following

In tragedy Kean, Pope, Holland, Powell, Foote, Thompson, Mrs West, Mrs Robinson, Mrs Egerton, Mrs Knight

In comedy Elliston, Dowton, Munden, Harley, Oxberry, Knight, Russell, Butler, Gattie, Hamblin, Barnard, Penley, Mordaunt, Hughes, Meredith, Elliott, Keeley, Mrs Glover, Miss Kelly, Mrs Edwin, Mrs Mardyn, Mrs Hallowe, Mrs. Orger

In opera Braham, T Cooke, Thorne, G Smith, Mackeon, Miss Carew, Miss Cubitt, Mrs Bland, Miss Povey, Mrs Austin

Artists Marinari, Andrews and Son, Dixon, etc

The musical department under the direction of Kelly, Leader, Smart, etc

In the month of February, 1821, we find George the Fourth making his first state visit to Drury Lane Theatre, the performances being "Artaxerxes," with Mr Poole's farce, "Who's Who" "The King, accompanied by his royal brothers the Dukes of York and Clarence, was punctual—a quarter before seven o'clock, but a considerable time afterwards elapsed before he thought proper to enter his box This was the first occasion of his appearing in public since his accession, and the uncertain result of his reception was evidently a question of some disquiet to His Majesty The pause which the King had occasioned was evidently embarrassing to his whole suite, of which His Majesty appeared suddenly to become conscious; when, with a movement almost partaking of a rush, he ad-

vanced to the front of the royal box In a moment all doubt was at an end The King's reception was enthusiastic and general His Majesty, in descending, made some allusion to his sly enemy, the gout. "*I have it myself, your Majesty,*" responded the manager \*

"On Saturday, the 21st of April, Lord Byron's tragedy, '*Marino Faliero*,' was published by Murray, and on Wednesday, the 25th, the play was represented by Elliston in Drury Lane The drama, sheet by sheet from the compositor's hands, was brought from the printing-office to the theatre, and the whole play, in fact, studied before publication On Wednesday (the day of representation) the formal licence came from the Chamberlain's Office, but within half an hour afterwards a notice reached Elliston from the publisher's solicitor, announcing that the Lord Chancellor had, on application, granted an injunction against the acting of '*Marino Faliero*' Elliston, with his wonted activity, sprang into a hackney-coach, with the view of driving to Hamilton Place, that he might see Lord Eldon himself on the subject The tardiness of the driver, however, ill suited his impatience Out again of the vehicle he jumped, making far better way on foot to his lordship's residence, where he arrived in very time to catch his lordship by the skirts of his clothing as he was mounting the steps of his own door Here the 'defendant' at once entered on the merits of his case, and his lordship declared the Court sitting—Lord Eldon on the upper step and Elliston on the pavement—the one all patience, the other all animation The

\* There are some delightful instances of this lofty familiarity of his recorded Mr. Bunn shall tell us of one, when a statue to Shakespeare was proposed, in which the King took an interest Mr Mathews, considering that the leading people in both the patent theatres should be consulted, directed Sir Charles Long, Sir George Beaumont, and Sir Francis Freeling to ascertain Elliston's sentiments on the subject As soon as these distinguished individuals (who had come direct from, and were going direct back to the palace) had delivered themselves of their mission, Elliston replied "Very well, gentlemen, leave the papers with me, and I will talk over the business with His Majesty"

Chancellor hesitated. At length Elliston so far succeeded that the judge suspended the injunction granted against the acting of the play for that night."

The well-known spectacular exhibition of "The Coronation"—one of the most amusing, fantastic projects, truly Ellistonian, was now to be undertaken. He took hold of the idea, that as the Drury Lane company were *His Majesty's servants*, they were directly and of right concerned in the great ceremonial, and, indeed, he pressed that they should have their place in the procession. But he did not, as it was to be expected, prevail. He then determined to have his coronation on the boards of Drury Lane.

Application he now made to Lord Gwydyr, Sir George Naylor, and other gentlemen especially concerned in the arrangements, all of whom conceded every facility to Elliston and his artist, by giving them free access to the preparations, and allowing drawings and models to be taken at the will of the parties. In fact, he began to look not only on the Drury preparations as movements in his individual glorification, but all that was going on at Westminster also, so that his senses positively reeled under the weight of this potent sirup. Nearly two hundred men in the employ of the India Company were engaged at Drury Lane on this occasion. Each man was known in the theatre by the office or character to which he was appointed. During the run of this spectacle, various amusing characteristic anecdotes were in circulation respecting the "Great Lessee," when, amid the acclamations of hot-pressed Drury, threading his way through the "upturned wondering eyes" of all London in the pit, he exclaimed, "Bless you, my people!" he believed himself no less than "The Lord's anointed."

A coronation medal was now struck by instruction of the Great Lessee, and specimens were presented for several nights to the first two hundred persons who entered the theatre. Next followed another *bizarre* incident. The Queen died on the 8th of August, and the day after the memorable funeral reports were very generally in circulation that Her Majesty's

death had been occasioned by poison, administered to her in a cup of coffee at Drury Lane Theatre by the connivance of Elliston. That the Queen partook neither of coffee nor refreshment of any kind was no refutation of this wild report.

What next followed has the air of pantomime—the two figures seem ever bemused with the remains of drink. Kean, returned from America with G. F. Cooke's "head!" which he had secured there, had no sooner landed than he addressed proposals to his brother-actor. It began

Liverpool, Coronation Day

MY DEAR ELLISTON,

With those feelings which an Englishman can alone understand, I have touched once again my native land. I shall be at the stage-door of Drury at noon on Monday next. Do you think a few nights now would be of advantage to you? I am full of health and ambition, both of which are at your service, or they will run riot

E. KEAN.

Playbills of an enormous size were, in a few hours, posted over London, announcing Kean's return from America, and his reappearance on the ensuing Monday as "Richard the Third." On the same sheet was advertised his "Magnificent representation of the Coronation," which only the day before had been positively abandoned. On the Monday, at about noon, a special courier announced the progress of Kean towards the door of Drury Lane, and within a quarter of an hour the cavalcade was in sight. Six outriders, in a medley costume of all nations of the earth that do not go absolutely tattooed, constituted the vanguard, then came Elliston himself in solitary grandeur, in his own carriage, drawn by four grays. The hero of the triumph next—Kean himself—likewise in his own carriage, supported by Russell and Hughes in cocked hats, drawn by four blacks. John Cooper followed, drawn also by four skewbald or piebald. A troop of horsemen formed the flank, composed of bruisers,

jockeys, tavern-keepers, dog-fighters, and other friends of the drama, and the whole was brought up by the heterogeneous rabble which the progressive affair had, from pillar to post, enlisted in its service

It was about this time that Stanfield and Roberts were adding to the glories of the theatre by their fine scenery. Indeed, the line of scene-painters at this house has been remarkable, and some of the old stock-scenes are still used. The work of Beverley and others is remarkable for the colouring, rich, sober, and subdued, and throwing out the more brilliant figures of the actors with good effect. Even with age, and somewhat faded, they seem to gain in mellowness like old tapestry or furniture.

In 1823, Macready made his appearance at the theatre. He was later to direct. He chose the artificial dramas of Sheridan Knowles, "Virginius" and "Caius Gracchus." We wonder now at the enthusiasm with which these performances once were greeted. The extraordinary sensitiveness of this actor, and his disagreeable temper, revealed with much extenuation in his diaries, was exhibited later in connection with another play of Knowles's, "William Tell." Raymond tells us what occurred.

The fifth act was in rehearsal on the morning previous to representation, when Macready abruptly quitted the theatre, declaring the play was not in a state for acting, and that he consequently should not play the part. The consternation of the manager may be imagined. A messenger, with a letter from Elliston, was despatched to Macready at his residence, Hampstead Heath, but he returned with the forbidding reply that Mr Macready still positively refused to play on the ensuing evening. But the production of the play for the 11th was still a vital question with the lessee, one effort more was resolved on, and Elliston determined on going himself to Hampstead. Efforts were yet stirring until five o'clock, but in vain. At length, however, Calcraft, in most impressive



language, begged the trial of the play as a personal favour, pleading the serious exigencies of the establishment Macready yielded, the play was acted, and no drama on a first representation had ever been more triumphant

Having engaged Kean, the well-known Cox scandal un- luckily followed It seems difficult to keep pace with the extravagances of this pair—tragedian and comedian Kean was dining at the Theatrical Fund Dinner, the Duke of Clarence in the chair, when the infuriated Alderman Cox tried to come and deal vengeance on the man who had injured him The actor drew a pistol from beneath his coat! When Young was engaged to act with him, Kean addressed this protest

Your treasurer has written to me, by which I find Mr Young is engaged for thirty nights to act with me Now this is what I call an impudent proceeding The throne is mine!—mine! I say—no one shall come near it, and I will maintain it even at the expense of expatriation To whatever quarter of the globe I may sail, all shall acknowledge me the first English actor

These two great performers, however, met, but with a jealous dislike on one side and a cold dignity and restraint on the other. Young, it was agreed, had the victory, and the more famous actor declined to continue playing with him \*

\* I possess the following curious notice

TO THE THEATRICAL WORLD AND THE CURIOUS GENERALLY,  
THE BEDSTEAD  
on which  
EDMUND KEAN, THE TRAGEDIAN,  
Breathed his last  
This relic, once the property of the greatest genius that ever  
graced the British Stage,  
WILL BE RAFFLED FOR BY 40 MEMBERS,  
AT 5s EACH, AT  
MR PHILLIPS', Swan Tavern and Lord Dover Hotel,  
Hungerford Market,  
On TUESDAY EVENING NEXT, the 16th inst  
At Seven o'clock to the Minute,  
THE PROPRIETOR AND WINNER TO SPEND HALF-A-GUINEA EACH  
The Bedstead can be seen on application at the Bar, by Tickets, Sixpence each,  
which may be had in Refreshments

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FALL OF ELLISTON

AFTER the season of 1822 had closed—not a successful one—the heedless manager determined to remodel his theatre on the most wholesale scale. When it is considered that the outlay was 22,000*l*, and the whole completed within eight weeks, the extent of the operations may be conceived. Vast as Drury Lane appears now, it will be seen how much larger it was before these changes were made. A model of the intended improvements was sent to the King, and the work of demolition was at once begun. Within a few days the whole interior of the building was one mass of rubbish, the walls being laid bare to the very back of the boxes. The reconstruction of the theatre was from the designs of Mr. Beazley. The parapet of the new boxes was brought forward five feet, contracting the pit, consequently, to the same limits. The entire ceiling was lowered some fourteen feet, an operation which excited great interest and some apprehension. The work was, however, most successfully accomplished. The saloon, to its full extent, was lined with looking-glass, the pilasters representing Sienna marble. Some years before the

present clumsy portico had been added, but for this design he was scarcely responsible. He had originally designed a handsome architectural one. With this may be contrasted the recent remodelling of the Lyceum, when the whole interior was "put on crutches," walls levelled and underpinned, and the accommodation largely extended, which was all done within a few weeks, the work going on night and day, with two "shifts" of workmen.

To commemorate the almost incredible expedition with which the work had been accomplished, a brass plate was deposited in the centre of the pit, bearing the following inscription

GEORGE IV KING

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE

The interior of this National Theatre was entirely pulled down and rebuilt in the space of fifty-eight days, and reopened on the 12th of October, 1822,

BY

ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON, ESQ.

The manager, though all the while he was showing symptoms of something like mental aberration, was adroit enough to make some lucky hits. He brought out Weber's masterpiece, "*Der Fieschutz*," not in a maimed and mangled form, as at the rival house, he engaged Catalani, and finally produced a spectacular piece, the reputation of which has become historical, "*The Cataract of the Ganges*,"\* in which a daring lady rode her steed up a cataract. The Italian singer's engagement was a failure †

\* This strange piece was revived at the same theatre in the season 1874-75, under Mr Chatterton's management, when Mr Webster, who had played in the original cast, took a part. It was found stale and uninteresting. It was difficult to believe that it had drawn astonished and delighted crowds. It was the work of Moncrieff, author of "*Tom and Jerry*."

† One night her share of the receipts was 9! When this gifted lady sang

But the tide had begun to turn, the extravagant oddities of the manager began to be noted, and were injuring the house. He brought "glass-blowers" on the stage, and his allowing Kean to appear excited much unpopularity as well as confusion. Mr. Douglas Kinnaird wrote to him that the actor was lost "if suffered again to be thrust upon the stage and make speeches." The most extraordinary scene of all took place on the occasion of the King's second visit to the theatre. Enormous crowds attended, and there was much excitement, which His Majesty attributed unreasonably to his own unpopularity. The late Lord William Lennox was present at all that followed, and corroborates what Mr. Raymond, who also witnessed it, relates.

The Chamberlain at once perceived the King's feeling, and instantly requested his vice-official, Lord Graham, to at once see the manager, that the uproar might be appeased by explanation. Lord Graham now hastened to the stage, where, meeting Elliston in full costume, and totally forgetting he was accosting a *crowned head*, exclaimed "Mr. Elliston, this is disgraceful! You should have prevented this excess. The King is vexed, and will never again come to Drury Lane."

Elliston now entered grandiloquently into the nature of his grievance, but his friend soon perceiving that wine had

"God save the King," a card was invariably transcribed for her, of this kind

Oh Lord avar God
Arais schacter
Is enemis and
Mece them fol
Confond tear
Politel se frosstre
Their nevise trix
On George avar hopes
We fix God save the
Kin

clearly disordered his wits, he gave him, therefore, certain advice, which produced the following .

"You are right, my lord The *deputy* has affronted me, and a *deputy* shall reply to it. My stage-manager shall take up the question in its present shape I shall meet no one but the Lord Chamberlain himself ! "

The King had returned to Carlton House—the escort to the Horse Guards, and it being now one o'clock of the following morning, the captain had doffed his leathern pantaloons and huge jack-boots, preparing himself for repose, when a sharp knock was heard at his chamber door. "Who's there ? " interrogated the captain

"One of His Majesty's secretaries of state, my lord, on urgent business," said the sergeant

To the sitting-room Lord William immediately proceeded, when he beheld, seated in an arm-chair, no less a personage than the monarch of Drury Lane—King William Elliston ! in the same court gear in which he had a few hours before attended the monarchy of Great Britain, but, a little damaged

"My lord, we must go out this very morning—I am steady to my purpose," added he, reeling actually in his chair.

Lord William now pursued the same policy he had taken in the manager's room—namely, representing that it was utterly impossible the monarch of Drury Lane could go out with any deputy whatever, and that, if he did, so far from his honour being vindicated, it would be more deeply involved

Elliston having liberally tasted of a "refresher," committed himself to the confidence of a pause, after which he said .

"And now, my lord, I would beg to ask, in which of the Royal Parks do you propose the meeting ? "

"Windsor, by all means," replied the captain.

After some further difficulty, the manager was placed in the hackney-coach. "You'll follow, my lord ? " said he, in a confidential whisper

"Certainly "

"Then, I am content.—To Shooter's Hill ! " exclaimed the manager to the coachman, and off he drove.

In the course of the morning the following letter reached him from Lord Graham.

SIR,

I regret to have heard that you felt hurt at some expression I used towards you last evening. This was far from my intention, my only object being to induce you to take some means which would remedy the disorder in the pit of the theatre, as well as the annoyance which it was to His Majesty and the rest of the audience. I feel sorry that you should have misconceived me so as to suppose I would intentionally have said anything disagreeable to you

But we now hear of the luckless manager being arrested in the street, of his having to take refuge within the rules; debts and difficulties gathered about him, a fit shattered his strength so that he could scarcely be recognised. The committee required him to resign, as he was incapacitated from looking after the theatre. He refused, and in vain urged that he had ever been punctual in his payments, that he only owed them 5000*l* balance out of so large a sum as 70,000*l*, and had, besides, laid out over 30,000*l* on the theatre. He was peremptorily called upon to pay within three days. Good security was offered, but it was refused, and he was dismissed, which seems harsh treatment. Soon after he was announced a bankrupt—"the Napoleon of Drury Lane"

Broken, shattered in health, ejected from his great theatre, this wonderful elastic being removed to the Surrey Theatre, and, with the well-known "Black-Eyed Susan," replenished his coffers again. He lived for several years, exhibiting his jaunty oddities to the end, and at last, worn out, died in July, 1831, at the age of 56\*

The loss of two old actors, the one owing to death, the

\* It would be curious to note how many great performers drink has destroyed — Kean, Cooke, Elliston, Lemaitre, whilst Kemble's power was certainly impaired by it

other to retirement, made these last seasons remarkable. Wewitzer, one of Garrick's veterans, who was believed to be the last survivor of his actors, died about this time, while the withdrawal of Munden, and the fact that Charles Lamb and his sister were able to witness his last performance, gave this event a permanent interest that it otherwise would not have had.

Sir Robert Bramble, in "The Poor Gentleman," and Dozey, in "Past Ten o'Clock," were the parts which this celebrated actor selected for his farewell benefit, and it was announced that, in the course of the evening, "Mr Munden would attempt to take leave of his friends and the public." The audience were exceedingly numerous. Munden played on this interesting night with his wonted feeling and energy, but the excitement of the occasion and a little fermented indulgence completely overcame him before he was *functus officio* with the audience. At the conclusion of the play he approached the lamps for the purpose of delivering an address—a poetical "vale," written expressly by Mr Talfourd. Poor Munden faltered very early, both in metre and matter, when, deliberately pulling out his spectacles, he commenced reading a production the spirit of which was the spontaneous outpourings of gratitude and affection. This little maladroit proceeding somewhat perplexed the sentiment of the night.

He was to return after thirty-four years' service in London, and had his farewell-night with the usual solemnities. He lived in retirement eight years, dying in 1832. Thus wrote Elia to *The Athenæum*.

DEAR SIR,

Your communication to me of the death of Munden made me weep. Now, sir, I am not of the melting mood, but in these serious times the loss of half the world's fun is no trivial deprivation. In the evening of my life I had Munden all to myself, more mellowed, richer, perhaps, than ever. I cannot say what his change of faces produced in me. It was not acting. His power was extravagant. I saw him one

evening in three drunken characters Three farces were played One part was Dozey, I forget the rest, but they were so discriminated that a stranger might have seen them all and not have dreamed that he was seeing the same actor He was not an actor, but something *better*, if you please Shall I instance Old Foresight in "Love for Love," in which Parsons was at once the old man, the astrologer, etc? Munden dropped the old man, the doter, which makes the character, but he substituted for it a moon-struck character, a perfect abstraction from this earth, that looked as if he had newly come down from the planets Now, *that* is not what I call *acting* It might be better He was imaginative, he could impress upon an audience an *idea*, the low one, perhaps, of leg of mutton and turnips, but such was the grandeur and singleness of his expressions, that that single expression would convey to all his auditory a notion of all the pleasures they had all received from all the *legs of mutton and turnips* they have ever eaten in their lives Now, this is not *acting*



## CHAPTER V

### SHIPWRECK OF THE PATENT HOUSES.

THE "Old Haymarket" of old playgoers, which has been so recently remodelled, does not stand on the site of the first Haymarket house, but was built next door to it, and opened in July, 1821. The history of the house is full of interest, and the words, "Haymarket Theatre," call up a peculiar class of association. The entertainment seemed to be in keeping with the house. The *débuts* associated with it are memorable, including Foote, J. Palmer, Edwin, J. Bannister,\* Henderson, Mathews, Elliston, Liston, Young, Terry, etc.; Miss Fenton, Mrs. Abington, and Miss Farren, while in modern times it will be ever associated with the memory of Buckstone and Sothorn. Indeed, a history of the Haymarket, and the lively style both of acting and play it encouraged, would show its great influence on English dramatic art. The system was to collect the best country actors, with a sprinkling of metropolitan performers, when the great houses closed. The season was usually from June 15th to October 15th, extended in 1810 to seven months. Some twenty years later it was reduced to five months. Its scenery was usually of the

\* In 1828, Bannister visited the theatre, and wrote in the Free List Book this entry: "Fifty years ago, in the year 1778, I made my first appearance at this theatre. Half a century is not bad. Hurrah! Jack Bannister."

most simple and elementary stock pattern—a wholesome blemish. The entertainments were of every kind, Foote's "Puppet Shows," with the actor's own humour and satire, his monologues, teas, etc., and most of the pieces had this free-and-easy licence. "Light comedy, interlude, and farce" were, however, its more regular fare. It might be thought that Foote, Fielding, and Colman were names sufficient to give it celebrity, but only a short time after the new house was opened it obtained an extraordinary success with a new piece, described as "the greatest theatrical hit of our time," and which is likely always to keep the stage. Of the writer and his play a short account will be found interesting. This was the veteran John Poole, who died quite lately, and who was the last of the genuine hearty-laughter-moving broad old-fashioned humorists. The broad principle of treatment which he affected appears in all the old farces, a specimen of which was the rustic damsel making the obtrusive attorney suitor conceal himself in a barrel, to be presently discovered whitened all over with flour. On the stage this homely surprise is ever effective, and variations of the same humble machinery are sure to tell with the multitude, affording a useful hint for the writer who would be popular. Poole was one of the most diligent adapters of his day, a title, however, he was inclined to repudiate as earnestly as though he had been one of our own living spoliators. To the actor and theatrical amateur the long list of his excellent acting plays are familiar, such as "Turning the Tables," "A Nabob for an Hour;" "'Twould Puzzle a Conjuror," and the ingenious and amusing "Hole in the Wall," which excites more interest and mirth, in proportion to its length, than any light piece of the kind. But it is "Paul Pry" that is destined to give to the name of Poole the true theatrical fame. The

figure lives like some historical personage, it is familiar to those who have never been inside a theatre, and it will always hold possession of the stage because it is drawn from the great collection of human characters, and, excepting a few local peculiarities, belongs to no country and is intelligible in all. The play itself is constructed on the true principle, the character producing the situations, not the situations the character, as is too often the case with modern English pieces. Every comic performer of any claims, as he advances to eminence, is called upon to give his reading of "Paul Pry," and since Liston, who originally "created" the part fifty years ago, a vast number of facetious players have failed or succeeded in the attempt. "Paul Pry" was first produced at the Haymarket in September, 1825, with a good cast that included Liston, Farien, Madame Vestris, Pope, and Mrs Waylett. It was acted some forty times—then a great run. The following season it was again taken up at Drury Lane, and acted every night in the season. Madame Vestris's Phoebe, the spirited and ingenious waiting-maid, was long spoken of with rapture by old playgoers, and her success was a good deal owing to the perfect naturalness of the part, and its being utterly opposed to the conventional style in which such characters are put upon the stage. But the picture of Liston and his peculiar costume became as familiar to the public mind as that of Mr Pickwick and even now in the china shops are to be met with little pottery statuettes of the droll comedian in his boots and white hat, his baggy umbrella under his arm. Not less familiar, too, is the engraving after the capital picture by Clint.

The critics of the day, when it first appeared, judged it temperately and fairly. "It is a pleasant piece," wrote Hazlitt in "The London Magazine," "but there is rather too much of it. The plot is compounded of several ancient and approved plots, and most of the characters are close copies of hackneyed

originals" With the irrepressible Liston he was enchanted. "There is really nothing in the part beyond the mere outline of an officious inquisitive gentleman, which is droll, as it reminds everyone of acquaintances, but Liston fills it with a thousand nameless absurdities" The hint thus thrown out on the first representation has been unconsciously adopted, for the play has since been compressed, though with some loss of effect There is no more diverting situation than the passage in which the indefatigable Pry unintentionally raises an alarm of robbers, and is himself pursued, as a robber, by the servants and dogs Nothing can be happier than the idea of such a retribution, as the natural result of his own espionage All the other situations come about in the same unconstrained fashion. The true key to the character of Paul Pry is of course earnestness—a genuine anxiety to know what his neighbours are about

It has often been repeated that Paul Pry was drawn from a familiar figure of the time—the eccentric Tom Hill, who was editor of "The Dramatic Mirror." Poole took occasion expressly to contradict this in a little biographical sketch of himself addressed to one of the magazines "The idea," he says, "was really suggested by an old invalid lady who lived in a very narrow street, and who amused herself by speculating on the neighbours and identifying them, as it were, by the sound of the knocks they gave" The author adds, "It was not drawn from an individual, but from a class I could mention five or six persons who were contributors to the original play"—which showed that he worked on true principles as applied to humour, viz. abstraction and selection.

The confusion into which things were hurrying may be conceived, when we find what took place on the production of "Fazio, or, The Italian Wife," a well-known poetical drama. This was actually seized on by the proprietors of the Olympic,

and fitted as a sort of opera, with songs and musical illustrations, to the indignation of the author; but the Chamberlain duly licensed it.

*November*, 1817 —It having been reported to me by the examiner of all theatrical entertainments that a manuscript, entitled, "The Italian Wife," being a melodramatic romance in three acts, does not contain in it anything immoral or otherwise improper for the stage, I, the Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's household, in consideration of the same, do, by virtue of my office, and in pursuance of an Act of Parliament in that case provided, allow the said manuscript to be acted at your theatre, according to the copy thereof delivered to me, and signed by yourself, without any variation whatsoever, unless such variation be likewise approved of by me in due form

INGRAM HERTFORD, Chamberlain

Mr Grove, Olympic Theatre,  
Prompter and Assistant Stage-manager

The piece was later produced at Covent Garden in its proper form

Meanwhile, so serious and embarrassed had become the state of things at this great house, that Mr Kemble determined to divest himself of all risk and responsibility, and retired to Lausanne, where he died, in February, 1823. A well-known actor, Fawcett, took his place as stage-manager, in which post he continued for many years. But in 1824 and 1825 important changes took place. Mr Harris dying, Mr Kemble had transferred his share to his brother Charles, an actor still remembered for his power and charm in characters of chivalry. The theatre was ruled by a large firm, consisting of Kemble, Messrs Const, Forbes, and Willett. The fate of this vast concern, on which depended the fate of many persons, was now sealed. To add to and make certain its ruin, the element of litigation was only wanting. A Chancery suit was instituted by Harris against Mr Charles

Kemble, in the course of which proceeding it was made clear that the theatre had been almost bankrupt from the day of its opening! Mr. Harris stated that the house had cost, with patent and old debts, some 400,000*l*. The annual expenses were 50,000*l*, which, with interest on the capital and debt, made a total of 70,000*l* to be earned!

According to the statement of Robertson, the treasurer, the profits of the first seasons were about 13,500*l* a year, which Mr Harris declared was devoted to paying off the debt Mr Place, in his interesting MSS, calculates that this left a deficiency of 4000*l* a year, which in twelve years would amount to nearly 50,000*l*. When, therefore, in 1821, Mr Harris handed over the reins to Kemble, Willett, and Forbes, those persons took it with "a floating debt of 60,000*l*." Captain Forbes later announced that this debt, under their régime, increased to 84,000*l*. But a short view of the respective shares of the parties will show how the affairs of the theatre stood

In 1809, at the opening, the property was thus held

Thomas Harris . . . .	14	24ths	
John P Kemble . . . .	4	„	
White . . . . .	3	„	} Powell's original quarter
Martindale . . . . .	3	„	
	<hr/>		
	24		
	<hr/>		

In 1812, Mr Harris gave his son Henry 2 24ths

In 1812, Willett and Forbes became entitled to White's . . . .	3	24ths
Mrs Martindale left Const a life interest in her . . . . .	3	„
In 1822, J Kemble gave his brother Charles his . . . . .	4	„
Thomas Harris and his son held . .	14	„
	<hr/>	
	24	
	<hr/>	

On March 11th, 1822, C Kemble, Willett, and Captain Forbes took a lease at 12,000*l*. The property then stood

Henry Harris	.	.	.	14 24ths
C. Kemble	.	.	.	4 „
Const	.	.	.	3 „
Willett and Forbes	.	.	.	3 „
				<hr/>
				24
				<hr/>

The rapidity with which the downfall of the two great houses was now to follow was indeed extraordinary. We shall not be long in following the stages of their ruin. Even the introduction of “oil gas” at Covent Garden, in 1828, brought disaster and panic, for, after the driving audiences away by the disagreeable stench, an explosion took place one night below the pit, which killed and wounded several persons, and obliged the theatre to be closed. The company moved to the English Opera, where the same desertion followed them. The last stage of degradation was reached when the town learned that an execution had been put in—distrant for “the King’s taxes”—and that the lessees were keeping out of the way. An attempt was made to save the concern by inviting public aid, and “subscriptions and donations,” it was notified, would be received, “to promote the means of averting the calamity by which the national theatre was so seriously threatened.” The most serious part of the case was the almost certain ruin of a fine corps of actors, experienced veterans and cultivated, such as Bartley, Fawcett, etc. On one night, when there was not 50*l* in the house, Mr. Place found himself in the green-room, where the actors sat, their faces overcast with gloom, when Fawcett said it was no use shutting their eyes to the fact that the players had seen their best days, public taste had completely changed as well as public habits. The hour of dining, the establishment of clubs, the desertion of fashionable persons, who were now more eager for dancing the new

dances—all these, it was felt, had brought the decay. Another more serious reason was the lack of skilled and judicious managers. Much was to be set to the account of Charles Kemble, a man of gay temperament and habits, who, as a friend of his said, “is, and always will be, poor, with an income of nearly or quite 2000*l* a year, which he muddles away, never having a shilling beforehand” In this disastrous state of the theatre he allowed himself 12*l* a night, acting four times in the week, while his daughter received 10*l*. The house was administered in the same extravagant fashion, Sir George Smart, the musical director, receiving 1000*l*.

We now hear of scuffles, scandals, and encounters between the managers, recriminatory pamphlets, and general pecuniary ill success. Mr Bunn furnishes one of the most extraordinary theatrical papers on record—“a memorandum of *eleven thousand* orders, amounting to the sum of 3851*l* 1*s.*, written under the management of Mr Charles Kemble at Covent Garden Theatre (taking the stock-nights in succession), by Mr Robertson, his treasurer, between the 17th May and 12th July, 1824,” a period of not quite three months! It was awkward, too, to add that these were chiefly required on the nights that the gifted manager performed Shakespeare.

Before this crisis came an interesting and unexpected event occurred, which postponed, though it did not avert, the impending crash. A young girl, daughter of Charles Kemble, suddenly became inspired by an instinct that the hereditary talent of the family might be found within her, and that she might help to restore her father’s fortune. She, herself, has recently related, in a charming popular memoir, this almost romantic episode\*.

\* Mrs Butler (Fanny Kemble), the last gifted member of so gifted a family, still lives to recount to her friends the recollections of her rather eventful life.



This success, however, in the hopeless condition of the theatre, could do but little, for it was calculated that the attractions of the nights on which she performed were neutralised by the "bad houses" of the other nights

It will not take long to recount the rest. After the usual appeal, hitherto made by managers of strolling and country companies, to the actors to take a portion of their salaries, together with other shifts, Kemble retired. In 1832, Laporte, manager of the opera, and a Frenchman, took it for a short time, and failed to do anything. He was succeeded by Captain Polhill, from Drury Lane, who was equally unsuccessful. In 1835, FitzBall, well known for his successful pieces, but who, "being a nervous man," says Mr Place, "though a writer of the most horrid melodramas, took the theatre. On the following day he was so stormed with applications for engagements that he became seriously ill, and the day after resigned." Then came Osbaldiston from the Surrey Theatre, bringing with him his actors and the peculiar pieces of that house. Macready was next induced to embark his fortune in the sinking ship, remaining a couple of seasons at a rent of 7000*l* a year. Later, there were Madame Vestris and Charles Mathews, who, as they frankly owned, held it at a weekly loss of 40*l*, and were ejected by the proprietors. These at last undertook the direction themselves, and in 1842 it was once more under the government of Charles Kemble, Forbes, Willett, and Surman, who represented the Harris interests. At length came the rather appropriate *finale* to the degradation of the old house, when one night, in 1856, as a conjurer was giving a masked ball of the most vulgar kind, it was burnt to the ground.

We now turn to Drury Lane Theatre. We find that, in June, 1826, proposals for letting the theatre were once more issued, and Bish, a member of Parliament, but better known as a lottery agent and speculator, offered himself as

tenant at a rent of over 1000*l.* a year, depositing 2000*l.* But in less than a week he withdrew, and a new tenant was found in an American, Stephen Price, to whom the forfeited deposit was handed over. He is described by Mr Place as "a man of coarse manners, repulsive conduct, and vulgar conversation, and therefore christened 'the American Chesterfield' His want of theatrical knowledge soon brought him to a standstill. The committee tried, on his fourth season, to eject him; he was a lawyer, defied them, and would not quit without being fee'd, which they did by an allowance for many weeks His rent was 10,600*l.* He left them in their debt nearly 2000*l.*, and became a bankrupt in 1830" A successor was found who, to everyone's surprise, proved to be Alexander Lee, piquantly described as "Lord Barrymore's tiger, the son of Lee the fighter, a broken-down singer at the Haymarket, and the keeper of a music-shop in the Quadrant." He had become insanely attached to the fascinating Mrs Waylett, whose "Buy a Broom" was the delight of the town, and, after the death of her husband, married her She was introduced into the theatre, and her wranglings and disputes with the lady in whom the other lessee was interested led to Lee's being driven from the theatre.

She was a woman of very bad temper, full of whims and caprice, passionate and sulky by turns, and she treated him as if he had been put into the world for the sole purpose of doing everything that her tyrannical fancy could dictate I have seen him at Vauxhall running about with plates, dishes, chicken, salads, wine, etc, with the agility and speed of a waiter, at her command, vainly endeavouring to give satisfaction to his imperious mistress by the most abject attention to her wishes Her extravagant habits were a constant drain upon his purse, and his resources being limited, he was always in a state of embarrassment and necessity. When she died, he was broken-hearted, and for weeks and months roamed like a restless spirit about the haunts in which he and the lady had been

accustomed to wander. He had on her death left the lodgings in which they had resided, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Vauxhall, and removed to another locality, but he was miserable, and actually went back to the lodgings in which she had breathed her last. He locked himself up in the bedroom, and as the landlord or landlady of the house became alarmed at his protracted stay of upwards of four-and-twenty hours therein, they, after repeatedly knocking at the door, forced an entrance, and found their lodger a corpse, doubled up on a chair beside the bed on which his wife had a short time before expired \*

Not having any money, he applied to Harley and others to join him in the venture, and was on the point of giving up the theatre, when he applied to a gentleman who had employed him to instruct a young lady in singing. This was Captain Polhill, who was delighted to join him, and took half the risk, the rent being 9000*l*. But in the May following (1831) they separated, and Polhill became sole lessee. The following season he appointed Bunn his manager. In May, 1833, Bunn gave himself out as patentee of both theatres, Polhill, for some reason, not wishing to be considered a proprietor. Bunn had been stage-manager under Elliston in 1823. His memoirs are entertaining reading, giving a curious picture of the confusion then reigning in stage-management. What, indeed, could be conceived of the reckless system which, unable to control one great theatre, must direct two? The idea was that of saving by working both with one company and a half. "Broad Court and Martlett Buildings," says Raymond, "from about half-past nine at night to a quarter from ten exhibited a most extraordinary scene. Actors half attired, with enamelled faces, and loaded with the paraphernalia of their art, were passing and repassing,

\* For an account of this person, see that strange book, Richardson's "Recollections of the Last Half Century," ii 129

whilst the hurried interchange of quaint words, 'Stage waits,' 'Music on,' 'Rung up,' etc., would have perplexed the stranger with a thousand surmises. Double-basses, trombones, long drums, books, and wearing apparel carried on the heads of figure-dancers, apparently just started from their beds." During the Christmas season the female performers had to thus flutter back and forward no less than six times !

This did not last long. Captain Polhill had retired, having lost no less than 50,000*l*, while Bunn, becoming sole director in 1834, contrived to remain until 1839, when he became a bankrupt, owing the proprietors 12,000*l*.\* He had turned the old theatre into an opera-house, and by the aid of Catalani had drawn the town for some time. He was succeeded by Hammond, who only remained a year. Finally, old Drury reached the lowest depth—shilling concerts, under the direction of Elhason, a German, who became a bankrupt like so many preceding directors. In 1841, Mr Macready tried to galvanise the establishment into prosperity, but the experiment of a season showed him it was hopeless. Such is the dismal history of the two great theatres.

It was not unnatural that this persistent tale of ruin, which had been almost uninterrupted for nearly thirty years, should have excited interest and speculation as to the causes which had led to such a catastrophe. Not only the ruined managers and the unlucky proprietors, but thinking persons, placed it to the competition of the smaller rival theatres, and to the disadvantages of the vast areas of the auditory, which only the strict enforcement of patent rights could fill.

It was during the reign of Lord Conyngham, Lord Chamberlain to George the Fourth, that the last blows which

\* Mr Macready made his engagement with Mr Bunn remarkable by assaulting his manager behind his own scenes, he smarting under what seems to have been fancied grievances.

sealed the fate of the patent theatres had been given Not merely complete toleration, but almost encouragement of the minor theatres set in.

One Mr Rayner (says Bunn), who had opened a theatre in the Strand, defied the Duke of Devonshire, and had refused to obey the King's own commands to close it, now received a formal licence The Haymarket Theatre, whose licence of four months had grown into one of eight, now obtained an extension of two more, and by virtue thereof completed a season of ten months. Foote and Colman were limited to about one hundred and four nights, now the theatre was to have two hundred and fifty

Mr Bunn also points out that the annual licences of the English Opera-house were extended, also those of the Adelphi and the Olympic Theatres, as also the one recently given to the Strand Theatre, a licence was given (and subsequently extended) to Mr. Braham's new theatre, and to the Opera Buffa (a minor Italian Opera-house)

But it was in 1831 that the question of the theatres once more began to "burn" Pressure was put on the Chamberlain, proceedings in the House of Commons were proposed; a petition from the Lyceum was addressed to the new king, praying for the additional privilege of a longer season. Against this the patent theatres protested, and the "Sailor King," possibly embarrassed, instead of deciding himself, referred the matter to the Chancellor, Lord Brougham. Three judges were called in to assist, and the matter was carefully considered The decision, given on February 17th, 1831, may be said to have settled the fate of the patents The Chancellor, who entered on this novel subject with his customary enthusiasm, spoke with no uncertain sound.

"It was not denied," he said, "by any of the parties that a licence from the Crown was necessary to open a theatre

within the precincts in question." The question, how far the patents already granted precluded any new grants, was argued. *The Chancellor had no doubt on this point, nor had any of the Judges. And it was taken as quite clear that the King had the entire power by law to make whatever changes he thought fit, to revoke those grants altogether, or to grant to either parties rights inconsistent with those granted formerly to the patent theatres.* They therefore advised an extension of the Lyceum term.

The King acknowledged this communication in an effusive document, saying that it was his own opinion, and that he looked to the good and pleasure of his subjects, and heartily concurred in it. As a speedy result of this pronouncement the term of the Lyceum was extended the following year for two months longer, thus giving it a season of eight months out of the twelve, virtually equivalent to the whole year. The same favour was granted to the Haymarket. And thus at the close, as well as at the beginning, the fate of the theatres was to be settled by the arbitrament of the Crown.

It was about this time that Sir E. Bulwer Lytton brought the matter before Parliament, and in 1832 a committee was appointed to investigate the whole question.\*

Parliamentary action was taken on the report until eleven years later, in 1843, when the Statute of 6 & 7 Vict. c. 68, "for regulating theatres," was passed.†

\* The report of the committee, now difficult to procure, is a most entertaining volume, as all the leading performers were examined, and gave their evidence with much dramatic point and vivacity. The question of the vast size of the patent theatres excited much difference of opinion, some maintaining that it made little difference. This argument, however, could only be based on the fact of a particular attraction having filled the house "from floor to ceiling"—indeed, at many periods during the last twenty years Drury Lane has been so filled. But this was owing to shows and spectacular plays, offering novelty in form, which soon ceased to attract. Charles Kemble, when drawn from his retirement for a few nights, thus filled the house.

† By this important enactment it was decreed, after repealing three statutes of James the First, portions of two others of George the Second, that all houses

This was really the "liberty of the theatre," which was now at last enfranchised.

After some years' experience, a section in the Act which dealt with the saloons or houses which combined the attractions of the tavern with performances, gave rise to a new and very nice question, viz. that of how far music-halls were to go in this respect. That lies out of the province of this work,\* but by 1866 the music-hall had become so important a social element, that a fresh committee inquired into the point, and after examining many performers, writers, and managers of theatres, recommended that all music-halls and kindred places should be placed under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain. Thus, the tendency to centralisation seems once again to favour this ancient and honourable control †

Having thus brought my labours down to within living memory, and completed this view of the stage in connection with social life and manners, I may fitly conclude this retrospect here, and withdraw "behind the scenes."

"for the performance of stage plays" must be licensed, except such as hold patents or licence from the Lord Chamberlain or justices. The Chamberlain's power was to extend to London and Westminster, and round the various boroughs and the places where Her Majesty shall occasionally reside. The name of the manager was to be on his bills, and he was to be bound in a bond. There were strict clauses as to plays, prologues, additions to old plays, fees, etc., and the Lord Chamberlain, whenever he shall be of opinion that "it was fitting for the preservation of good manners, decorum," etc., was to have the power of forbidding the performance "anywhere in Great Britain, and either absolutely or for such time as he shall think fit." Pecuniary penalties for actor or manager not exceeding 50*l.* were fixed, and "stage-play" was defined to include "every tragedy, comedy, farce, opera, burletta, interlude, melodrama, pantomime, or other entertainment of the stage." The justices were to hold "special sessions" to consider every application.

\* I may be allowed to refer the reader interested in this question to another book of my own, "Principles of Comedy and Dramatic Effect," where it is fully dealt with.

† Mr Hertslet also has kindly pointed out to me yet another important recognition of the office, in an Act of 1878, "The Metropolis Management and Building Act," c 32, where the Board may look after any theatre "defective in its structure," or in danger as regards fire, "with the consent of the Lord Chamberlain as to the theatres under his jurisdiction."

## APPENDIX A.

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### *The Lord Chamberlain's Records.*

It will have been seen by the reader that the system of the stage in England has, during its whole course, and in a very curious way, depended on the action of the Lord Chamberlain and his officers. At this moment, indeed, the duties of the Department entail serious work, and now, the theatres having increased to such an enormous extent, the task of supervision becomes more important than ever. It has been shown in these pages how absolutely essential it is that this control should exist, and that exhibitions on a stage are certain to degenerate into licence when attraction is found to flag. If this duty, moreover, could be allotted to a single department—as it is one of singular delicacy and tact—its being exercised by the sovereign would take off the stiffness and harshness which it might otherwise entail.

It is remarkable that this restraint obtains in all leading foreign countries. But the most important parallel is that of France under the Empire, when “the liberty of theatrical industry” was granted by a decree of the Emperor, dated January 6th, 1864. By this all privileges were removed, and anyone was allowed to open and play all pieces, subject to a certain supervision. By a decree of December 30th, 1852, every piece was to be read and approved of by the Minister of the Maison de l'Empereur, or in the country, by the Prefect. Managers and actors continued to be controlled merely by the police.

Having been allowed access to the records of the office, which appear not to have been used for any work on the stage, I was astonished to find how completely and thoroughly the control over the theatres and players was exercised down almost to our own day.



They are admirably kept and carefully indexed, and are accessible in every way. A few entries to support and supplement the statements in the text will show this very clearly.

In January, 1675, a dispute arose between Killigrew and his company as to shares, and a settlement was made by the Lord Chamberlain. In December, 1675, articles for regulating the Royal Theatre, signed by the master and comedians, were presented to the Lord Chamberlain "as their superior officer." In February, 1676, the players having left off playing owing to private disputes, were ordered by the Lord Chamberlain to commence playing again forthwith. In August came an order to forbear playing. In September they were required to obey the Chamberlain during the difference between Mr Killigrew and his son, and in February, 1677, ordered to obey Mr Charles Killigrew, the son. In 1678, the actors of both houses, the servants of the Revels, etc., to obey Mr Killigrew when they play at Court. No actor was to carry away their acting clothes from the house. In 1686, November 29th, we find a complaint of Mrs Lacy for the unjust detention of 3s 4d a day from her by the managers. The parties to appear before the Lord Chamberlain for a decision. On December 27th, 1687, a decision was given in her favour. In 1691, the comedians of both theatres were *suspended* for an insult to a peer of the realm, after three days the suspension was removed. In 1692, an order issued that only persons of *good rank and quality* were to be admitted to the Royal Theatre. By indenture between C Killigrew and D. Davenant, all benefits, privileges, powers, and authorities before mentioned are covenanted to be as one from thenceforth for ever. (See Sir T Skipwith's answer to Betterton.) About 1690, the actors seem to have quarrelled with the patentees. In 1694, we find a petition of the players, Betterton and others, with articles of pretended grievances against patentees. In 1695, licence to Betterton. On June 14th, 1710, five actors of Drury Lane were suspended for riotous behaviour. On March 5th, 1711, Collier was directed to send in all the accounts of the Opera-house, and the terms of the engagements with the actors, complaints being made by them of non-payment. On April 17th, 1712, a licence was granted to Owen Sweney to form a company at the Opera-house "during the Royal pleasure." On April 17th, regulations were made to prevent the Comedy Company and the Opera Company interfering with each other, while the former was enjoined to pay Sweney 100*l* a year towards his expense. In 1709, on November 19th, we find a letter from Sir J. Stanley to Mr Collier, M P.

telling him that, at the Lord Chamberlain's desire, the Queen will grant him a licence for comedy and tragedy for November 23rd, upon the condition that Mr Rich and other claimants in the patent are excluded from all share in the management Collier, it seems, entered into a lease with the landlords of Drury Lane Theatre, and took possession on November 22nd On December 24th, 1709, regulations for the managers were issued "to submit all agreements with actors to the Chamberlain, all players were to be sworn in, no ladder-dancing or antics were to be introduced on the stage, and all plays to be licensed by the Master of the Revels" In 1711, on November 15th, we have "Queen Anne's sign-manual," forbidding persons to stand behind the scenes, and ordering them to pay the established prices, and in 1712, another sign-manual of the same kind On November 11th, 1713, a licence was granted to Collier, Wilks, Cibber, Dogget, and B. Booth to form a company to play comedies, tragedies, and all other theatrical performances (musical entertainments excepted) *during pleasure*, and revoking all other licences On the 3rd of November, 1714, by petition Cibber prays that Dogget be ordered to do his usual parts, when they would gladly admit him to an equal share We here find a most singular incident in the shape of a petition from Mr Betterton and Mis Bracegirdle for a reformation and a new regulation of the theatres The various privileges granted to Steele were dated as follows A licence to him and his partners on October 18th, 1714, a petition for patent in January, 1715, the law officer's opinion on January 12th, 1715, and the King's warrant to prepare a bill for patent, January 14th, 1715 (The patent was dated January 19th) On October 25th, 1718, queries were put to the Attorney-General (and this is significant) as to a claim made by the managers, *to be exempt from the Chamberlain's jurisdiction*, on the terms of the patent to Steele In 1718, on November 15th, Steele received 514*l* for presents to his actors and the expenses of seven plays performed at Hampton Court Palace On January 23rd, 1719, a King's warrant revoked the licence to Steele and his partners of October 18th, on account of great misbehaviour of the comedians "from want of proper management" All other licences were also revoked On January 25th, 1719, came a warrant from the Chamberlain prohibiting all performances On January 27th, 1719, a licence was given to Wilks, Cibber, and Booth "during Royal pleasure" On February 2nd there was "a caution" to the theatre as to benefit-nights, and "not to raise the prices without leave" On February 15th, an order to the managers to act Mr Gay's "Pastoral Tragedy" On December 19th, 1719, there

came a warrant from the Lord Chamberlain dismissing Mr Colley Cibber On May 2nd, 1721, the managers were ordered to account with Steele for his share of the patent. On December 4th, 1721, an order not to allow any actor to leave without a discharge from them, and due notice given to the Lord Chamberlain On December 5th, 1729, came the order of George the Second that no one stand on the stage during the opera On November 2nd, 1730, an order to receive no actor, singer, or dancer from each other's company *without leave from the Lord Chamberlain* On May 15th, 1731, a King's warrant to Cibber, Wilks, and Booth for twenty-one years, from December 1st, 1732, to perform at Drury Lane *or elsewhere* The patent was given on July 3rd, 1731 On March 10th, 1737, an order from the Lord Chamberlain strictly forbidding plays on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent On March 10th, 1738, William Chetwynd was appointed Examiner of Plays, and Thomas Odell deputy In 1749, Edward Capell was appointed Deputy Licensor at 200*l* a year In 1750, plays were forbidden at the Haymarket, and the manager ordered to dismiss his company as acting without a licence As regards the country, it is curious that nearly forty years elapsed before country managers thought of obtaining patents The first obtained, after the greater and well-known London, was one to Younger and Mattocks, at Manchester, 1775 Next followed Newcastle, 1787, Manchester, 1796, Bath, 1797, Chester, 1798, Bristol, 1799, Kingston-upon Hull, 1803, York, 1803, Liverpool, 1807, Birmingham, 1807, Margate, 1807, Edinburgh, 1809, Chester, 1819

*Memorandum on the Lord Chamberlain's Authority*

I have received from the Hon S Ponsonby Fane, of the Lord Chamberlain's Department, a very clear  *précis*  of what is to be gathered from these records, and from which I have taken what is essential for the purpose in view

*Memorandum on Theatres, dated March 12th, 1866*

That the Chamberlain's authority proceeded from the sovereign alone is clear, from the fact that no Act of Parliament, previous to the 10 Geo. II c 28 (passed in 1737), alludes to his licensing powers, though he was constantly exercising them The office records prove that between 1628 (when they commence) and 1660, the Lord Chamberlain licensed and closed theatres, interfered in the copyright of plays, and either personally, or through the Master of the Revels, had complete control over managers and actors. In 1662 and 1663,

King Charles the Second granted the two well-known patents to Thomas Killigrew and Sir Wilham Davenant, for all kinds of stage entertainments as therein named, and by these two patents all other companies in London and Westminster were silenced. The two patents were united by indenture in 1682, the intention of the combining patentees being to create a monopoly for their exclusive advantage. In 1695, King Wilham the Third granted a licence to Betterton and his company of actors to set up another theatre, and from that time forward there were again two theatres in London. The licence granted to Betterton was renewed from time to time, and at last converted into a patent of twenty-one years' duration.

About the year 1731, the theatre now known as the Haymarket Theatre came into existence, it was occasionally licensed from 1749, was known as Foote's Theatre, and, after 1778, received an annual licence for the regular drama, but only during the summer months. In 1809, the Lyceum, which for some years before had been licensed for music and dancing, was licensed for "musical dramatic entertainments and ballets of action." And about the same time the theatre now called the Adelphi was permitted to give "burlettas, music and dancing, with spectacle and pantomime." In 1813, the Olympic was licensed for the same performances, and for horsemanship, and another minor theatre in Catherine Street, Strand, was similarly licensed. Burletta licences were also granted for the St James's Theatre in 1835, and for the Strand Theatre in 1836. At this time also various theatres had been established beyond the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction, such as the Surrey, the Coburg, Astley's, and others, and several places called saloons sprang up, which were really public-houses, enlivened by theatrical entertainments. These theatres and saloons were beyond the liberties of Westminster, and there was no law in existence under which they could be licensed, they pretended, however, to be open under a magistrate's licence for "music, dancing, and public entertainments," but this authority afforded them no protection when it was thought worth while to prosecute the managers. As regards legislation between 1660 and 1843, it may be remarked that the early Acts of Parliament relating to players were, in reality, Vagrant Acts, and it was not till 1737 that the question of theatrical licences, and of the censorship, received a solution at the hands of Parliament. The 10 Geo II c 28, passed in that year, empowered the Lord Chamberlain to grant licences for theatrical entertainments, as therein defined, within the city and liberties of

Westminster, and wherever the sovereign might reside, and it constitutes him licenser of all new plays throughout Great Britain. The 25 Geo II c 30, passed in 1751, enabled the justices of the peace to license houses for music, dancing, and public entertainment after five o'clock in the afternoon, but sect 4 of the Act excepts the patent theatres, Crown licences, and the Lord Chamberlain's licences from the penalties of the Act. Under this power, therefore, the Lord Chamberlain granted licences for music, dancing, recitation, conjuring, and many kinds of public entertainments, which cannot be classed as stage-plays, from 1751 to 1843. He ceased to grant these licences in 1843, when the 6 & 7 Vict c 68, was passed, believing it to be the intention of the Legislature that his licences should thenceforward be limited to stage-plays, but the law officers of the Crown have recently reported (1866) that his powers to grant licences for music, dancing, and miscellaneous entertainments under this Act have not been repealed by the 6 & 7 Vict c 68. In 1787, the 28 Geo III c 30, enabled justices of the peace to licence theatrical entertainments occasionally under the restrictions therein contained, but they could not grant licences within twenty miles of London, nor near any royal residence. Theatrical matters stood thus immediately before the Act of 1843.

The Act of 1843 (6 & 7 Vict c. 68) extended the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction from Westminster to the Parliamentary boundaries, and so defined the word "stage-plays" that the Lord Chamberlain decided to grant the same licence to all theatres, both those in Westminster and those brought within his authority by the new Act. The managers of all theatres and saloons were licensed to give stage-plays in the fullest sense of the word, and during the whole year, under a bond with the Lord Chamberlain, as prescribed by the Act of Parliament, twenty-four theatres or saloons were thus licensed at Michaelmas, 1843, after the passing of the Act, of these, seven had been previously licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, and ten theatres and seven saloons came, for the first time, under the Lord Chamberlain's authority. All respectable places of entertainment established before the passing of the Act were licensed, and in the case of saloons, the Lord Chamberlain ruled that the entrances to the stage should not be through the bars or tap-rooms of the taverns to which they were attached, that no drinking or smoking should be allowed during the hours of performance,\* and that no saloon should be open before five o'clock P M.

Although no condition against smoking or drinking appears in the licence to theatres, it was clearly understood that they were forbidden.

The form of licence to the saloons was somewhat altered in 1845, smoking being still interdicted, and refreshments allowed only during the intervals between the performances, as at theatres. Tables or stands for refreshment were also forbidden.

In deciding upon applications for new licences, the question of safety has been the first consideration, but the Lord Chamberlain has been in other respects guided by the interests of the public. He has required that an applicant should produce a petition, signed by many of the inhabitants in the immediate vicinity, in favour of the proposed theatre, he has requested the Police Commissioners to verify the truth of the petition, and to report whether inconvenience was likely to result in the way of interruption of traffic, or otherwise, from the establishment of a new theatre. He has usually obtained the opinion of the parish authorities.

The Opera-house in the Haymarket was surveyed between 1825 and 1829, and in 1828, the Covent Garden Theatre proprietors were compelled to produce an architect's report of the safety of the building before it was opened. In the same year the Surveyor of His Majesty's Works caused a survey to be made of all the theatres in the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction, at the request of the latter. The first move in this direction was made in 1850, when the Commissioners of Police were requested by the Lord Chamberlain to report as to the means of egress from all the theatres in London. They reported unfavourably of five theatres. In 1852, the Lord Chamberlain, after consulting the official referees under the Building Act, required from the proprietor of every theatre a certificate as to the safety of the structure, to be made either by the district surveyor or some other competent architect or surveyor. In 1853, the Lord Chamberlain addressed a circular to all the managers, recommending improved ventilation in their theatres. In the licences of 1854-55, a condition was attached to the grant of every licence making its validity depend on an observation of the rules as to ventilation, facility of egress, and other precautions, which the Lord Chamberlain might think fit to make during the currency of the licence. In the autumn of 1855, the first annual inspection took place of the whole of the metropolitan theatres. It was made by an officer of the Lord Chamberlain's Department, assisted by a surveyor, and the chief points of investigation were, first means of egress in case of fire, improvement of ventilation, means of extinguishing fire, safe hanging of chandeliers, and cleanliness of the building.

In the spring of 1856, letters were sent to the managers, pointing out the defects which had been observed, enjoining them at once to remedy the most important. Since 1856, the metropolitan theatres have been examined once every year from roof to basement, and the inspector reports that very great improvement has resulted from the examination. The Lord Chamberlain has further, within the last few years, extended his inspection to some of the stage arrangements, in consequence of fatal accidents which occurred to dancers from the ignition of their dresses. Without relieving the managers from their responsibility in these respects, he has enjoined that the footlights shall at all theatres be protected by wire guards, and that no lights shall be placed at the wings lower than four feet from the ground. He has also, without making a positive order, recommended the use of un inflammable material for women's dresses on the stage.

The returns show that from the beginning of 1852 to the end of 1865, 2816 plays were submitted for licence, out of which only 19 were rejected, of those, two were from Scripture subjects, seven were of the swell-mob and burglary school, and the bulk of the remainder were French plays of an immoral tendency or English versions of them. In order, however, to make the supervision effective, the play-bills of all London theatres are sent weekly to the Lord Chamberlain's Office, and examined by the Reader of Plays, who also attends any performance when important alterations have been made in a piece submitted for licence. By a circular to the managers in 1847, the Lord Chamberlain expressed his disapprobation of the practice which had existed of admitting prostitutes into the theatres, as such. In 1846, he required that the police should be admitted to all London theatres, and particular tickets were then provided for the purpose. At various times the Lord Chamberlain has prohibited at theatres certain performances which had become popular from the excitement of the risk attending them, such as the exhibition of trained wild beasts, and performances like those of Blondin. He has also discouraged masquerades, which, if they have taken place at any of the theatres, have been contrary to his express wish. In 1846, the Lord Chamberlain was memorialised by the manager of the Surrey Theatre to order a discontinuance of the low prices which had been commenced by some of the saloon managers, and followed by the smaller theatres, his lordship, however, declined to interfere, looking to the meaning of the law, which, by allowing the additional theatres and saloons in 1843, had no doubt in view the enlargement of the means of entertainment to the poorer classes of London.

The practice of introducing pantomime and ballet in the music-halls commenced some years ago at Canterbury Hall, and was soon followed by other music-halls. The managers of theatres who considered their licences to be invaded by this innovation, requested the Lord Chamberlain's interference; but as the law does not make him prosecutor, he preferred to leave the matter in the hands of those whose interests were most concerned. The managers of theatres thereupon took proceedings, and various decisions, chiefly adverse to the music-halls, were obtained. The late decision, however, in the Court of Common Pleas, though it went to the question of fact, and not to the question of law, has practically left the music-hall proprietors in a position to give ballets with costume and scenic effect, without any such control or precautions as are exercised in theatres under the Lord Chamberlain's authority. The length of the litigation was due, no doubt, to the obscurity of the definition of the word "stage-plays" in the 6 & 7 Vict c 68, and of "music, dancing," and public entertainments in the Act 25 Geo II c 30.

It should also be mentioned that, up to 1861, the theatres in the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction were closed for dramatic performances during Passion Week. In consequence, however, of the strong representations made by the managers of the hardship inflicted upon them by restrictions which were placed upon no other class in the community, the limitation clause as to Passion Week was omitted in the licences issued in 1861, always excepting Good Friday, and the question of opening in Passion Week is now left to the discretion of managers. Another point to be mentioned is that of late years the theatres have been used on Sundays for prayers and preaching. An application was made to the Lord Chamberlain to put a stop to this, but as, in his opinion, no harm could result from it, he declined to interfere.

### *Examiner of Plays*

The office of reader, or examiner of plays, now so efficiently exercised by Mr E Pigott, dates, as is well known, from the Licensing Act of 1737, when Mr Chetwynd was appointed, with one Odell as deputy. George Colman is, perhaps, the most recollected of those who held the office in past generations, and was long known for his severity in excising "oaths" which were not of a very profane character. Mr W. Bodham Donne, who held office in 1866, gave some incidents of his duties in a pleasant way



“Charles Kemble,” he said, “did duty for a little more than a year. He returned to the stage only for twelve nights. I believe there was an objection raised by Mr Bunn, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, to Mr. Kemble’s appointment. Charles Kemble went abroad very soon after his appointment, and then his son acted for him for a time, and then the examinership was conferred on his son John Kemble told me that his father said he did not think that he read five plays after he was appointed, but in the latter part of John Kemble holding office I aided him I have held the office from the year 1857 to the present time As many as 1800 plays or more have passed through my hands It takes up a good deal of time, certainly, but you get into the habit of it I can take in every word, and yet read very quickly Many of the manuscripts are very short Rejected plays have diminished very much of late years All the excisions which I made in 1865 would not occupy more than one sheet of paper, not because I overlooked what was wrong in them, but because they did not require it. I draw a line in red ink, which means that those words are to be omitted. The public salary is 320*l*., from which I pay income-tax, leaving the net salary about 310*l*.. There are fees according to the number of acts in the play That fee never exceeds 2*l*. 2*s* It is 2*l*. 2*s* for three acts and over, under three acts it is 1*l*. 1*s* One song is 5*s* All plays pass through my hands I think I could undertake to say that I could examine them . . . There is one gentleman who, I understand, introduces extemporary songs every night, such a case as that could not come under my jurisdiction, of course My busiest time is in the month of December, just before Boxing-night, and in the course of that month I generally have five or six regular plays to examine; but, besides, I always read through about twenty-seven pantomimes and burlesques at that time of the year In a pantomime we make them now put down what they do, as well as what they say in the introduction Formerly the comic business was not put down, but being once called to account for what they did, I said ‘If I am to be answerable for what you do, I must see what you are going to do’ You have that comic business written down?—Yes When the harlequin comes on and dances with the columbine?—Yes. And where he makes a change, and so on, you have that written down?—Yes, everything.”

## APPENDIX B.

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*Transfer of Patent from Colonel Brett to Wilks, Estcourt, and Cibber.*

(Vol. 1 p. 263)

THIS Indenture, made 31st day of March, in the seventh year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Anne by the grace of God, etc. anno que dom. 1708 BETWEEN Henry Brett of Albemarle St in the county of Middlesex, Esq, of his one part, and Robert Wilks of Spring Garden, in the said county of Middlesex, Richard Estcourt of the parish of St Paul, Covent Garden, and Colly Cibber of Spring Garden aforesaid, in the s<sup>d</sup> county of Middlesex, gentlemen, of the other part WHEREAS by virtue of one Indenture of Assignment bearing date Oct 6th, 1707, made between Sir Thos. Skipwith, Bart, of the one part and said Henry Brett of the other part, and of the right, title, power, interest, and claim therein and hereby given, transferred, and absolutely assigned and set over to the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett of and in certain Letters Patent of our late Sovereign Lord King Charles II made to Sir Thom. Davenant and Charles Killgrew, Esq, or one or both of them, for the acting of all sorts of stage-plays, interludes, operas, and the managing and ordering the same as by the said indenture etc may more fully appear Whereas witness these presents, and to the end therefore the several actors now in pay at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, and all officers, servants, and agents now acting by authority under the s<sup>d</sup> Letters Patent or Patents may be under the direction of persons capable of the well-ordering and governing the premises, and also for divers other good causes and considerations said

Henry Brett thereunto moving, he the said Henry Brett hath made, ordained, substituted, authorised, and appointed, and by these presents doth make etc, and in his place put the s<sup>d</sup> Robert Wilks, Richard Estcourt, and Colley Cibber, jointly for him and in his right and power, to be his *deputies, attornies, and managers* of the said company of players now acting etc, hereby giving and investing for his the said Henry Brett's part, them the s<sup>d</sup> Robert Wilks, Rich, Estcourt, and Colley Cibber jointly, with power and authority to direct the acting and performing from time to time all such plays, new or old, as they in their judgment shall think most proper and advantageous to the business in general, and also *to take in, discharge, advance, take down, encourage, and forfeit* all actors, officers, servants, or agents belonging to the said Theatre Royal as in their judgments they shall think fit and proper, and also to order the making and altering such clothes, scenes, properties, and other things as by the joint opinion of them the s<sup>d</sup> R Wilks, Rd Estcourt, and Colley Cibber shall be thought most necessary and prudent for the right, benefit, property, and true interest of the s<sup>d</sup> Patent or Patents, and thereby the advantage of actors and acting in general, and further to do or cause to be done any other lawful act that he the s<sup>d</sup> H Brett, etc

AND for the avoiding of all disputes or disagreements which may possibly happen between the s<sup>d</sup> Ro Wilks, Rd Estcourt, and C Cibber in the execution of this deputation and trust so as aforesaid given and reposed in them It is the true meaning and intent of the s<sup>d</sup> H. Brett that no sum or sums of money shall be expended within the compass of one week exceeding the sum of forty shillings without the mutual consent and agreement of all three of them the s<sup>d</sup> etc., testified in writing under every one of their respective hands, and such testification to remain and be in the treasury of the s<sup>d</sup> Theatre Royal

And as touching and concerning all and singular other the matters and things which shall or may happen concerning the execution of the same, if any difference of opinion shall arise amongst them the said etc the same shall be absolutely determined by any two of them agreeing one with the other, and the third person dissenting from them to be concluded as consenting as much to all intents as if he were also of the same opinion. Provided always, that it shall be lawful for him the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett at any time to revoke and annihilate these presents and the power and authority thereby given, and that

from the time of such revocation these presents shall be void and of non-effect, anything to the contrary above-mentioned notwithstanding In consideration of which said trust, power, and confidence as substitutes, directors, and managers, so as aforesaid by the s<sup>d</sup> H Brett jointly reposed in the s<sup>d</sup> R Wilks etc, the s<sup>d</sup> R Wilks etc, for themselves, executors, etc, do jointly and severally covenant, promise, and agree to and with the s<sup>d</sup> H Brett, his heirs, etc that the s<sup>d</sup> R Wilks, etc, nor any or either of them, shall not nor will not at any time hurt or abuse the authority and power so given to them as aforesaid, but on the contrary shall and will from time to time and at all times hereafter, to the best of their power and skill, use all their endeavours to support and maintain the right and property of the s<sup>d</sup> Patent or Patents, and the company now acting under the same, without leaving any private ends of their own separate from the interest thereof, but shall and will, to the best of their several capacities, do justice and reason to all actors, servants, agents, or other person or persons concerned in or with the s<sup>d</sup> company, without using any private favour or enmity to any, and shall and will industriously use all and each of their best endeavours to discourage and make useless all private ends and designs that may anywise tend or hereafter be intended to disturb, alter, or change the present constitution of this same AND FURTHERMORE, touching and concerning such part of this deputation and management in relation to benefit plays, that for the future the conditions thereof shall be as followeth (viz), and to which the s<sup>d</sup> R Wilks, etc do jointly and severally further covenant etc with the s<sup>d</sup> H Brett, his heirs, etc THAT from and after the 10th day of June next ensuing the date thereof no benefit day or play whatsoever shall be consented to or agreed by the s<sup>d</sup> R Wilks, etc without the person who hath the same depositing into the hands of the treasurer of the said office of the Theatre Royal the sum of *forty pounds*, and such actors whose salary do not amount to four pounds per week (*in case such have benefit days*) to leave (besides the said sum of forty pounds as aforesaid) in the hands of the s<sup>d</sup> treasurer *one part in four* of the clear profits of such benefit play, and such actors who have not above fifty shillings per week, *a full third part* of the clear profits, and those who have not above *forty shillings* per week, *one half part* of such clear profits, the forty pounds as aforesaid there to remain in the hands of the s<sup>d</sup> treasurer for the use and benefit of the s<sup>d</sup> patent and of the business in general AND moreover the s<sup>d</sup> R. Wilks, etc do also jointly and severally

covenant etc with the s<sup>d</sup> H. Brett THAT no such benefit play shall be hereafter taken or given to any actor before the *last week* in February in every year, and not more than *one benefit play* to be performed in *one week* from the said last week in February to the month of May the next following in every year. IN WITNESS whereof the s<sup>d</sup> parties, etc

## APPENDIX C.

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*Goldsmith's borrowings from Fielding and others.*

(Vol II. p 262 )

It has, I believe, never been noticed how much the amiable "Goldy" has borrowed or "conveyed" from his dramatic predecessors. Foote's Mr and Mrs. Aircastle and their son Toby certainly supplied something—the name is almost the same—for Mr and Mrs Hardcastle and Tony. The first scenes of their appearance have a strange similarity.

*Mrs A* Bless me, Mr Aircastle, will you never give over your grumblings? I thought I had convinced you that London was the only spot for people to thrive in

*Air* . . . . But you never will have patience.

*Mrs A.* More than ever woman possessed. Would you, I say, be contented to spring, grow, and decay in the same country spot, like a cabbage?

*Air* Yes, provided I left behind me some promising sprouts.

*Mrs. A* What? Have you no ambition? Could you be easy to stand stock still while your neighbours are advancing all round you? Cottagers are become farmers; farmers, justices, and folks that travelled barefoot to London roll down again in their coaches.

And again

*Mrs A.* No, I suppose Toby (their son) would rather stay at home and marry Bet Blossom.

Goldsmith has Bet Bouncer And when Mrs Aircastle says of her hopeful .

Grace, Mr Aircastle, what grace !

*Air* Grace ? He has neither grace nor grease. His breastbone sticks out like a turkey's.

But Lofty's detection is taken almost verbatim from "The Wedding Day"

*Mutable* White's Now I mention White's, I must send an excuse to my Lord Goodland He invited me two days ago to dine with him to-day.

*Mil.* Two days ago ? Why he went into the country a week since

*Mut* Nay , then Sir Charles Wiseall was mistaken, for he delivered me the message yesterday, which is a little strange methinks

*Mil* Ay, faith, it is very strange, for he has been in Scotland this fortnight.

*Mut.* How ?

*Mil* 'Tis even so, I assure you.

And later on we have Sir George Goose.

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